Çankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
2026, pp. 338-354
https://doi.org/10.47777/cankujhss.1824071

ÇANKAYA UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Language Studies | research article

Corpus-Driven Lexical Profiles of Feminine Words in Turkish: Bayan, Kadın and Karı

Türkçede Dişil Sözcüklerin Derlem-Çıkışlı Sözcük Profilleri: Bayan, Kadın ve Karı

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ABSTRACT
This study aims to examine the semantic and pragmatic features of the three female-referential words "bayan," "kadın," and "karı" using a corpus-driven approach. Accordingly, colligations, collocations, semantic preferences, and semantic prosodies of the words were analyzed using concordance lines obtained from the Turkish National Corpus (TNC) with an "extended lexical unit model." To this end, the concordance lines of each word were subjected to multiple readings, and recurring formal and semantic patterns were classified to determine the semantic relationships between words. The findings show that words have different discursive functions and social representations. The word "bayan" is concentrated in institutional, formal, and neutral contexts; in classificatory and labelling areas of use, while not carrying a distinct emotional prosody. "Kadın," on the other hand, exhibits a multi-layered pattern of meaning in semantic fields such as emotional evaluation, motherhood/family roles, cultural identities, and political discourse, in addition to physical description; it develops positive and negative prosodies depending on the context. The word "karı," on the other hand, is used in pejorative, slang, and derogatory contexts; it carries a predominantly negative connotation, producing a distinct negative prosody through insulting adjectives, demeaning comparisons, and masculine possessive discourse. The study demonstrates that female-referenced words are shaped at the level of linguistic choice by gender ideologies, value attributions, and discursive positioning. In this respect, the findings provide important clues for broader sociolinguistic research on how representations of women are constructed.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 14 Nov 2025
Accepted 22 Jun 2026

KEYWORDS
corpus linguistics, corpus-driven, lexical profile, collocation, semantic prosody

Introduction

The meaning and function of linguistic units cannot be explained solely by dictionary definitions; meaning largely becomes apparent within the network of relationships constructed in contexts of use. In this regard, John Sinclair (1991, 2004) states that the selection of words is not random but they are selected within "units of meaning" alongside collocates that reinforce the intended meaning. Depending on this idea, Stubbs (2005) provides a model for revealing the pragmatic and semantic functions of a word called "extended lexical units." This model is consisted of collocation (the tendency of a word to occur with other words), colligation (relating to grammatical contexts/patterns), semantic preference (the semantic preferences of a unit), and semantic prosody (the tendency of units to have recurring positive/negative predicates). As Sinclair (2004) states, a more nuanced and explanatory linguistic analysis becomes possible when the systematic examination of word usage patterns is revealed through concordance lines of a specific lexical item.

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In this type of studies, when lexical profiles are described, either frequency and statistical trends are shown through quantitative collocation/colligation analyses which are called corpus-based, or these trends are interpreted in terms of discourse and pragmatics in light of qualitative examples, namely concordance lines, and this approach is called corpus-driven as in this present study. As Stubbs (2005) also demonstrates, quantitative outputs alone do not convey the full meaning; quantitative findings must be interpreted through careful close-reading of in-text examples. This theoretical-methodological blend has shown that corpus-driven studies are particularly powerful in revealing subtle differences between near-synonyms.

On the other hand, corpus-driven analyses have been widely used in gender studies to reveal how female/male representations are encoded in language. As seen in Baker's 2014 study, collocation and semantic preference analysis allows for the systematic mapping of gendered concepts (e.g., adjective and verb preferences surrounding "woman"/"man"); thus, it is possible to see not only which words are used, but also which ideological tendencies this usage supports. Similarly, corpus studies on feminism and representations of women in media discourse (e.g., Batkin, 2018; Ribot, 2019) have revealed recurring prosodic (emotion/tone) tendencies, making social evaluations visible.

In the Turkish context, studies on representations of women and gender stereotypes provide important data on general trends. However, there are still gaps, particularly in terms of comparative, corpus-driven analyses of synonymous or near-synonymous words (e.g., kadın, karı, bayan). Recent studies (Altohami & Salama, 2019; Özdemir, 2021; Topsakal & Şardağı, 2021; Ashgar & Akhtar, 2022; Erdoğan, 2023) conducted using participatory dictionaries and media datasets have revealed that depictions of women vary across public discourse and different text types; however, most of these studies either focus on a single word/medium or fail to sufficiently relate quantitative findings to qualitative samples. This gap necessitates a corpus-driven comparison starting from concordance lines and interpreting the collocational/ colligational profiles of each node word together with semantic preference and prosody dimensions.

This article aims to extract the collocational and colligational profiles of the words "kadın," "karı," and "bayan" through concordance lines obtained from the written language examples in Turkish National Corpus (TNC) data and then to discuss the semantic and pragmatic differences of these profiles in the context of semantic preference and semantic prosody. Thus, the aim of this study is to document the nuances these three words carry at both the linguistic and social levels by revealing their usage records in close semantic proximity through a corpus-driven method. The conceptual framework and previous studies will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Although there are numerous corpus-based studies in the international literature that address the concepts of collocation, colligation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody together (e.g., Sinclair, 1991; Stubbs, 2001; Hunston, 2002; Partington, 2004; Bednarek, 2008), research examining these four dimensions holistically in the Turkish context still remains limited. Existing studies (Aksan et al., 2016; Cangır et al., 2017, Kozan, 2019) have mostly focused either solely on the frequency of co-occurrence of words or have relied on statistical data rather than systematically analyzing contextual examples. In particular, the question of how the usage patterns of words related to gender carry an emotional and ideological tone at the semantic prosody level has not been sufficiently explored in Turkish written discourse.

This gap requires a systematic and corpus-driven study that analyzes which words, grammatical patterns, semantic fields, and discursive connotations are used together with words such as kadın, karı, and bayan, which are directly related to gender in Turkish. Such an analysis will reveal both the semantic boundaries of words and how these boundaries are produced in social and cultural contexts.

In this regard, the study seeks answers to the following research questions: 1. In what typical collocation and colligation patterns do the words kadın, karı, and bayan appear in the Turkish

National Corpus data? 2. What differences in meaning regarding the linguistic representations of gender do the semantic preference and semantic prosody tendencies observed in the use of these words reveal?

Theoretical Framework

The meaning of a word is shaped not as an isolated unit, but through the regular associations it forms with other elements within the language. Sinclair (1991, 2004) explained this approach using Stubbs' (2005) "extended lexical units" model, stating that a word's usage patterns form a multi-layered system that carries its formal, semantic, and discursive features together. In this regard, a corpus-driven approach considers the corpus as a source to posit new hypotheses. Hence, it is an inductive process in which the linguist analyses the corpus about a topic (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). This model, in which detailed observations are transformed into various hypotheses and generalizations, consists of four components: collocation, colligation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody. These components reveal not only the syntactic context of a word, but also the value judgments, emotional tones, and cultural extensions of meaning it carries.

Stubbs (2001, 2005) and Hunston and Francis (2000) emphasize that considering these four dimensions together provides a systematic method for determining the usage-based meaning profiles of words. This method is widely used not only in describing individual words, but also in identifying semantic distinctions between near-synonyms, in dictionary compilation processes, and in conceptual field analyses. Therefore, the extended lexical units approach provides a robust analytical framework that enables a comprehensive interpretation of quantitative and qualitative findings derived from corpus data.

In this approach, collocation refers to the meaningful frequency with which a word appears together with other specific words. Colligation refers to the tendency of a word to appear in specific grammatical structures or syntactic positions. Semantic preference refers to the tendency of a word to be used together with words belonging to a specific semantic field, while the concept of semantic prosody refers to the general emotional or evaluative tone of a word, that is, its positive, negative, or neutral tendency arising from the context (Partington, 2004; Bednarek, 2008).

This approach is also becoming increasingly accepted in Turkish. Adıgüzel and Aksan (2020) examined the word profiles of the verbs irkil- and ürküt-, demonstrating that these verbs have different semantic preferences and prosodies. Adıgüzel (2019a, 2019b) has demonstrated the potential of this approach for semantic studies in Turkish by analyzing the discourse functions of words such as yalnız, yalnızca, sadece, and sırf. Demir and Özyıldırım (2024a, 2024b), on the other hand, examined the differences in meaning and function of the verbs dertlen- and hüzünlen- based on corpus data, demonstrating that emotional word fields in Turkish can be systematically analyzed using this method. Gündoğdu (2019a), (2019b), Aytaç Demirçivi (2022), Kamacı Gencer (2023) are other examples in Turkish context.

This study aims to reveal the word profiles of three words related to gender in Turkish—kadın, karı, and bayan—by following the aforementioned theoretical framework. Although all three words refer to the same social reference (female identity), they have different layers of meaning in terms of their historical development, areas of usage, and discursive connotations. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of colligations, collocations, semantic preferences, and semantic prosodies of words provides a powerful method for analyzing the cultural and ideological representations of the concept of womanhood in Turkish.

Method

Data Collection

This study uses data from the Turkish National Corpus (TNC) (Aksan et al., 2012), a balanced corpus of approximately 50 million words compiled from written and spoken Turkish between 1990 and 2009. The corpus was used to retrieve concordance lines for the node words under

investigation.

Large corpora play an important role in linguistic research. Hunston (2002), Biber (1993), and Anthony (2018) have emphasized that large corpora are indispensable in terms of representativeness for identifying systematic patterns in language. Such corpora enable the examination of the grammatical and semantic behavior of words as they appear in their natural context.

In this study, the words "kadın," "karı," and "bayan" were searched separately through the TNC interface. Concordance lines were extracted for each word using the corpus's default settings (+-5 words from the node). The data obtained was saved in Excel format and then examined manually. Although this study was conducted as a qualitative analysis based on a corpus-driven approach, frequency and normalized frequency values provided by the TNC were also reported at a descriptive level to illustrate the general distribution of the target words within the corpus. See Table 1 below.

Table 1 Distributional characteristics of the node words in the TNC

Node	Frequency	Number of Texts	Normalized Frequency
Kadın	31432	2301	620.23
Bayan	2548	726	50.28
Karı	1202	582	23,72

These data provide a contextual framework regarding the general prevalence of the target terms within the corpus and serve to support the findings of the study's qualitative analysis.

Data Analysis

This research adopts a corpus-driven approach. Unlike corpus-based studies, the corpus-driven approach aims to uncover new patterns of meaning from the data itself, rather than verifying predefined hypotheses. Tognini-Bonelli explains this difference as follows: in corpus-based research, data are used to test pre-established theoretical assumptions, whereas in the corpus-driven approach, data is used "to uncover new grounds, posit new hypotheses and not always support old ones" (2001, p. 61).

In this regard, the concordance lines obtained for each target word in the study were examined manually. In each concordance line, the collocational and colligational patterns established by the node word with the words surrounding it were determined. In this process, the researcher, as McEnery and Hardie suggest, "examines each line individually, identifying by eye the items and patterns which recur in proximity to the node word and reporting those that they find of note, possibly with manually compiled frequency counts but without statistical significance testing" (2012, p. 126). This approach is called *collocation via concordance* and does not rely on statistical data as in *collocation via significance* approach.

During the analysis, irrelevant or context-free lines were eliminated, and relevant lines were recorded. Subsequently, for each word, colligational and collocational patterns were categorised, semantic preference, and semantic prosodies of each word were discussed accordingly.

On the other hand, as Brezina (2018) noted, inter-rater agreement is crucial for the coding process to be consistent, reliable, and objective. For this reason, to support the internal reliability of the study, a random subsample selected from the dataset was independently coded by a second researcher. The coding process was conducted primarily through grammatical syntactic categories, and the agreement between the two coders was measured using Cohen's kappa coefficient. The obtained value (Cohen's $\kappa = 0{,}72$) indicates a significant level of agreement.

Additionally, throughout the process, the researcher reevaluated the findings through repeated readings and continuously reviewed the hypotheses derived from the data to establish the final patterns of meaning. In this study, colligational patterns have been presented alongside frequency values because they are structurally more distinct and have clearer boundaries. In

contrast, since analyses of collocation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody are more context-dependant and require an interpretive examination, these categories have been evaluated based on qualitative patterns.

Methodological Notes and Limitations

The concepts of collocation and colligation may overlap in some cases; particularly, in examples such as forms of address, proper noun combinations, or title usage, a structure can be analyzed at both the syntactic and semantic levels. For this reason, the study focuses solely on structural patterns (e.g., adjective + noun, noun + auxiliary verb, verb + object, etc.) under the heading of colligation; collocations with a predominantly semantic function are addressed at the collocation level. This distinction is made to ensure conceptual clarity in the interpretation of the data.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that this study is based on qualitative observation and manual classification rather than statistical measurements (e.g., chi square, t-score, etc.). This is because the goal of the corpus-driven method is to understand the intuitive patterns of natural language, not statistical probabilities. Therefore, the computer is merely a technical tool, while the researcher is the ultimate authority on linguistic interpretation.

It should also be noted that, in this study, the identification of the categories of colligations, collocations, semantic preference, and semantic prosody was carried out by a single researcher. This situation entails a certain degree of risk of subjective evaluation in the interpretive processes. However, since the study adopted a corpus-driven approach, the analysis categories were not predefined but were derived through repeated and detailed examination of the data. In such an approach, the researcher's repeated reading of the data to discover patterns and develop hypotheses based on these patterns is a fundamental methodological principle. Consequently, inter-rater agreement measures such as Cohen's kappa—commonly used in studies relying on predefined coding schemes—do not fully align with the exploratory and inductive nature of this study. However, conducting comparative analyses involving multiple researchers in future studies could contribute to enhancing the reliability of the findings.

Findings and Discussion

Colligational Patterns

The corpus data shows that the words bayan, kadın, and karı appear in different syntactic patterns in Turkish. These syntactic patterns reflect not only a formal distinction but also differences in social and discursive functions. In this subsection, the most frequent syntactic colligations of each word in the TNC data have been examined and classified thematically.

Colligational patterns of the word "Bayan"

Table 2 below illustrates the colligational patterns of the word "Bayan" in the TNC data.

Table 2 Colligations of "Bayan"

Type of Colligation	Number of cases	Examples	Pragmatic / Semantic Function
Address structure (Bayan + proper name)	286	Bayan Ayşe, Bayan Demet, Bayan Yılmaz	Formal, polite, and distant form of address.
Use with job title (Bayan. + job title)	106	bayan sürücü, bayan doktor, bayan öğretmen, bayan sporcu	Gender marking function; emphasis on social gender.
Use with participles (–An / –DIk)	97	çalışan bayan, oturan bayan, gösterilen bayan	Descriptive and observational tone; common in news and formal language.
Use with positive/neutral adjectives	88	güzel bayan, bakımlı bayan, genç bayan, yaşlı bayan	Polite, neutral, or slightly flattering contexts.

TNC data shows that the word bayan is mostly used as a form of address. The most common pattern is bayan + proper name (*Bayan Ayşe, Bayan Demet, Bayan Özlem*, etc.). This structure reveals that the word functions as an indicator of formality and politeness in social

communication.

Another commonly used structure is the pattern of bayan + occupation name (*bayan öğretmen, bayan sürücü, bayan voleybolcu, bayan doktor, bayan sporcu*, etc.). This usage reinforces gender categories through language by making the emphasis on gender visible. Compared to the expression "kadın öğretmen" (female teacher), the structure "bayan öğretmen" is observed to carry a more distant and formal tone.

Furthermore, the use of the word bayan with participles ending in -An and -DIk (eg. çalışan bayan, oturan bayan, gösterilen bayan, etc.) shows that it is preferred in action-based constructions where the word is the subject. In contrast, adjectival phrases such as *güzel bayan, bakımlı bayan, genç bayan* (beautiful woman, well-groomed woman, young woman) show that the word woman is used in neutral or positive evaluative contexts.

According to these findings, the grammatical equivalents of the word bayan generally convey tones of respect, formality, and distance.

Colligational patterns of the word "Kadın"

Findings on the colligational patterns of "Kadın" are illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Colligations of "Kadın"

Type of colligation	Number of cases	Examples	Pragmatic / Semantic Function
Opposition (woman – man)	330	kadın ve erkek, erkek–kadın eşitliği (women and men, gender equality)	Presenting gender categories as a binary opposition.
Family/ Child context	79	kadın demeden çocuk demeden..., kadın ve çocuklar (without saying 'woman' or 'child,' "women and children")	The association of female identity with motherhood and caregiving roles.
Adjective + kadın	72	güzel kadın, yaşlı kadın, çekici kadın, şuh kadın, zavallı kadın Beautiful, old, attractive, seductive, poor woman etc.	A broad distribution of adjectives based on physical and emotional evaluation.
Proper noun + kadın	36	Ayşe kadın, Fatma kadın, Emine kadın	Traditional/folk speech-specific title-like usage.

The word "kadın" frequently appears in binary oppositions throughout the collection. The pattern of "kadın- erkek" (woman-man) is one of the most prominent reflections of the binary structure of gender in Turkish. This structure demonstrates that social identities are constructed through opposition.

Another pattern group consists of the associations formed between the word "woman" and the concept of "child" such as Kadın demeden çocuk demeden(without saying 'woman' or "child")/ kadınlar ve çocuklar etc, ("women and children," etc.). This usage reflects a cultural framework in which women are identified with motherhood, caregiving, and domestic roles.

Furthermore, adjectives preceding the word "kadın" reveal how the word is positioned in different social representations. Structures such as güzel kadın, (beautiful woman), şuh kadın (seductive woman), and alımlı kadın (attractive woman) emphasize physical appearance, while structures such as zavallı kadın (unfortunate woman), bahtsız kadın (poor woman), and ihtiyar kadın (old woman) carry an emotional and fatalistic tone.

The word "kadın" following proper names (Fatma kadın, Ayşe kadın, etc.) is historically a remnant of predominantly rural and traditional forms of address. Such patterns demonstrate that the word "kadın" exists in two distinct discursive fields: modern and traditional.

Colligational patterns of the word "Karı"

Colligational patterns of the word "Karı" are illustrated in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Colligations of "Karı"

Type of colligation	Number of cases	Examples	Pragmatic / Semantic Function
Dual expression- karı koca (husband and wife)	326	karı koca tartıştı, karı koca çalışıyor	The stereotypical relationship between husband and wife; neutral as a whole,
Meaning of "wife" in a historical/ religious context	18	Yakub'a karı olarak verildi (She was given as a wife to Jacob)	Archaic, neutral usage; traces of historical meaning.
Compound name (old hag)	5	koca karı ilaçları, koca karı sözü	Sarcastic, belittling, stereotypical meaning.
Usage with gibi preposition	78	karı gibi gülmek, karı gibi ağlamak, karı gibi küpeli	An ideological structure that presents womanhood as a negative behavioral pattern.
Usage with negative adjectives	95	Manyak karı, cadı karı, pislik karı, cahil karı etc	derogatory, pejorative meaning

The word "karı" is most prominently used in fixed phrases in the collection. While the expression "karı koca" (wife-husband) carries a neutral and complementary meaning, the structure "koca karı" (old hag), with the reversal of the words, takes on connotations of old age, belittlement, and negativity.

When examining the adjectives preceding the word, it is seen that the word "karı" is mostly used in a pejorative context. Structures such as "manyak karı" (crazy woman), "pislik karı" (filthy karı), "cahil karı" (ignorant karı), and "cadı karı" (witch karı) represent slang expressions created with negative emotional connotations.

In addition, uses such as "benim karı" (my wife) show that the word is positioned within a relationship of ownership and objectification. These patterns reflect a masculine discourse structure that defines women not as autonomous subjects but as objects to be owned. What is interesting in this type of usage is that the word "karı" is not used in its possessive case marked form "karım" ("my wife") and that women are expressed as if they were objects through a kind of abstraction.

Finally, the expression "karı gibi" (like a woman) produced with the preposition "gibi" and the verbs within the phrase "karı gibi gülmek," "karı gibi ağlamak," "karı gibi zırlamak," "karı gibi küpe takmak," etc. (laugh, cry, yell, wear earring like a woman) represent a derogatory usage produced through comparison in Turkish. This structure can be considered a linguistic reflection of a social ideology that devalues feminine behavior by attributing certain behaviors to women.

Collocational patterns of "Bayan," "kadın" and "karı"

Collocational patterns of the word "Bayan"

This section is based on the collocations of the word "bayan," identified through a corpus-driven approach involving the manual examination of concordance lines obtained from TNC, focusing on recurring lexical patterns. In this method, collocations were evaluated not so much through quantitative measurements but rather through the regular and consistent collocation patterns exhibited by the lines across multiple readings. The findings show that the word bayan largely acquires meaning in Turkish in formal, classificatory, and gender-based contexts. See Table 5 below on the collocational patterns of "bayan."

Table 5 Collocational patterns of "bayan" in the TNC.

Theme	Collocation examples	Explanation/ Semantic Function
1. Gender Discrimination	*bayan – erkek, erkek ve bayan*	The word functions as a member of the gender category in most uses; it constructs its meaning through opposition.

2. Official / Corporate Labels	*bayan takımı*, *bayan sporcu*, *bayan voleybolcu*, *bayan atlet*, *bayan milli takım*	Categorical classification in sports and competition fields; common in official and bureaucratic terminology.
3. Positive / Neutral Descriptive Adjectives	*güzel bayan*, *genç bayan*, *bakımlı bayan*, *yaşlı bayan*	Limited but distinct; descriptions with a polite, neutral, or slightly flattering tone.
4. Participles. (–An / –DIk)	*çalışan bayan*, *oturan bayan*, *gösterilen bayan*, *tokalaşmayan bayan*, *gelecek olan bayan*	Role-defining function in news, reports, testimonies, and official narratives; action-centered descriptions.
5. Title / Form of Address Usage	*Bayan Ayşe*, *Bayan Demet*, *Bay ve Bayan X*	Formal and distant form of address; carries the nature of a title.
6. Collocation with Proper Nouns	*Bayan Ayşe*, *Bayan Yılmaz*, sağ bağlamda: *mona*, *bella*, *angel*	Character introduction function in translated novels and narrative language; title + proper name model.
7. Descriptive Language / Role Statement	*bayan olarak…*, *olan bayan*	The function of "identity/role designation" frequently appears in official documents, news language, and observer narratives.
8. Discourse-Transfer Collocations	*bayan dedi*, *bana bayan…*	Visibility in dialogue and conveyed speech; character introduction or portrayal.

First, one of the most prominent collocations of the word "bayan" is the word "erkek" (man). The recurring "bayan-erkek" (woman–man) pairing in both left and right contexts indicates that the meaning of the word is mostly constructed in conjunction with the opposite gender category. This pairing demonstrates that the word "bayan" appears in discourses that define gender within a binary opposition and that gender classification is explicitly manifested in the language in such texts.

Another strong collocation group consists of structures that carry a corporate and official labeling function. Examples frequently seen in concordance lines, such as "bayan takımı" (women's team), "bayan atlet" (female athlete), "bayan milli takımı" (women's national team), and "bayan voleybolcu" (female volleyball player) reveal that the word is used as a gender marker, particularly in sports, competitions, and corporate classifications. These collocations are an important finding showing that the word bayan functions as a "classifying label" in institutional categories in modern Turkish.

When examining descriptive uses, it is observed that the word "bayan" establishes a limited but meaningful collocation relationship with positive or neutral evaluative adjectives such as "güzel bayan," "genç bayan," "bakımlı bayan," "yaşlı bayan" (e.g., beautiful woman, young woman, well-groomed woman, elderly woman). The limited number of these adjectives indicates a narrower range of evaluation compared to the word "kadın" (woman). This suggests that "bayan" is a word preferred in more distant, polite, and formal contexts.

Participle focused collocations are also noteworthy. Examples such as "çalışan bayan," "oturan bayan," "el sıkışmayan bayan," "gösterilen bayan," etc. (working woman, seated woman, non-shaking woman, and signified woman) reveal that the word is heavily used in contexts defined by action. These patterns are typically seen in news language, official reports, or testimony-based discourse, suggesting that the word woman functions as a "role-defining descriptor" in these text types.

Furthermore, the use of the word bayan with proper names (Bayan Ayşe, Bayan Demet) is also evident at the collocation level. This structure supports the idea that the word functions as a title in modern Turkish. Repeated foreign proper names in the right context (Mona, Bella, Angel) indicate that the word "bayan" is frequently used in character introductions and descriptions in translated novels and narrative language.

Finally, collocations such as "bayan dedi" (the lady said), "bayan bana dedi ki" (the lady said to me that") show that the word appears in dialogue, narrative, and direct speech. These patterns reveal that the word is used particularly in character introductions, forms of address, or

references within speech.

Generally speaking, the word "bayan" in Turkish produces a collocation network that focuses on gender opposition, official categorical labeling, descriptive but distant definitions, and the use of titles/forms of address. This systematic collocation behavior clearly shows how the word's social and discursive functions are shaped at the lexical level.

Collocational patterns of the word "Kadın"

Table 6 shows the collocational patterns of the word "kadın."

Table 6 Collocational patterns of "kadın" in the TNC.

Theme	Collocation examples	Explanation/ Semantic Function
1. Gender opposition	*kadın–erkek*, *kadın–adam*	The positioning of the word "kadın" in the social gender system through opposition; the reproduction of binary structures in language.
2. Age and physical description	*genç kadın*, *yaşlı kadın*, *ihtiyar kadın*, *güzel kadın*, *şişman kadın*, *şaşı kadın*, *sağlıklı kadın*	Defining female identity through appearance, age, and body; physical characteristics playing a prominent role in discourse.
3. Emotional/Evaluative Adjectives	*masum kadın*, *zavallı kadın*, *bahtsız kadın*, *çaresiz kadın*	Emotional value attributions that present women as fragile, victimized, pitiable, or subjects requiring protection.
4. Family and Relational Roles	*kadın–çocuk*, *kadın ve çocuklar*, *kadın çocukla birlikte*, *kız çocuk*	The representation of women through motherhood, caregiving, and domestic roles; the foregrounding of relational identity.
5. Cultural, National, and Ethnic Frameworks	*Türk kadını*, *Anadolu kadını*, *Ermeni kadın*, *Avrupalı kadın*	Defining women as representatives of a cultural, geographical, or ethnic identity; ideological characterizations.
6. Social/Political Discourse Collocations	*kadın hakları*, *cinsel şiddet*, *kadınlar arasında*	Policy and public discourse centered on women's rights, equality, and social issues.
7. Narrative/ Dialogue Collocations	*kadın dedi*, *kadın yaşadı*, *kadın tarafından*, *kadın vardı*	The word has high visibility in texts that contain stories, testimonies, and event narrations.
8. Situation/Evaluation-Focused Patterns	*hiç kadın*, *kadın değil*, *kadın yoktu*	Structures in which women are evaluated in terms of absence, negation, or comparison; prosodic cues.

Analysis shows that the word "kadın" has a very broad and multi-layered collocation network in Turkish. This network is particularly concentrated around gender opposition, physical and age-based descriptions, cultural and national qualifiers, family and social roles, emotional/evaluative adjectives, political and social debate areas, and narrative/dialogue usage.

First, the most prominent collocation area for the word "kadın" is gender opposition. In the concordance lines, the word "erkek" (man) appears with high frequency in the left context, and the "kadın–erkek" (woman-man) pair regularly appears in contexts where gender categories are presented in a binary opposition. Similarly, the word "adam" (man) also forms a strong collocation, indicating that in Turkish, the reference to "male" is coded through "adam" in certain contexts. In this regard, the relationships between woman–man and woman–male clearly reveal the word's position within the gender system.

Secondly, the word "kadın" is used in conjunction with numerous age and physical description adjectives. In lines, expressions indicating age, such as "genç kadın" (young woman), "yaşlı kadın" (old woman), "ihtiyar kadın" (elderly woman), as well as physical characteristics, such as "güzel kadın" (beautiful woman), "şişman kadın" (fat woman), "şaşı kadın" (cross-eyed woman), "sağlıklı kadın" (healthy woman) are repeated. In addition, physical appearance indicators that can be evaluated within a cultural/ideological framework, such as "tesettürlü kadın" (veiled woman), are also strong collocations. This diversity demonstrates that the word "woman"

occupies a prominent place within a field of description that is open to interpretation and framed by visual and social norms.

Thirdly, a significant part of the collocation network consists of national, ethnic, and cultural qualifiers. Phrases such as "Ermeni kadın" (Armenian woman), "Avrupalı kadın" (European woman), "Türk kadın" (Turkish woman), "Anadolu kadını" (Anatolian woman) in the concordances show that female identity is defined not only as an individual entity but also through cultural representation, ethnic affiliation, or geographical identity. Such combinations are a strong indicator of the social and ideological layers of meaning of the word.

In addition, the collocation of "kadın ve çocuklar" (women and children) has emerged particularly strongly in the right context. Patterns such as "kadınlar ve çocuklar" (women and children), "kadının çocukları" (woman's children), "çocuklu kadınlar" (women with children), etc. show that women's identity is often conceptualized through motherhood, caregiving, protection, relational roles, and position within the family. This trend is one of the reflections of cultural discourse in the collection.

Another set of collocations consists of the combinations formed by the word "kadın" with emotional and evaluative adjectives. Examples such as "masum kadın" (innocent woman), "zavallı kadın" (poor woman), "bahtsız kadın" (unfortunate woman) can be seen in concordances, and similar examples form the linguistic traces of contexts in which women are presented as sensitive, fragile, or victimized subjects within discourse. This structure also provides meaningful clues about the semantic prosody of the word.

In line with these, collocations specific to social and political discourse are also noteworthy. In particular, the strong presence of the expression "kadın hakları" (women's rights) in the concordance lines reveals that the word woman has gained high visibility in areas of social debate such as rights, equality, violence, and justice. Similarly, elements such "cinsel ilişki" (sexual affair), "cinsel kimlik" (sexual identity), "cinsellik" (sexuality), etc. are among the collocation areas of the word "kadın" in terms of its biological existence rather than a socially-constructed gender identity.

Finally, the word "kadın" draws attention due to its frequent use in narratives, stories, and speech transcriptions. Words such as "kadın dedi" (woman said), "kadın söyledi" (the woman said), "kadın yaşadı" (the woman lived), "kadın vardı" (there was a woman), and "kadın tarafından" (by the woman) that recur in the right context show that the word frequently appears in narrative-focused discourse. Patterns such as "the woman said," "the woman lived," and "by the woman" reveal that the word occupies a central position in texts that convey events or contain testimonies.

When all these findings are evaluated together, it is possible to say that the word "kadın" in Turkish is a lexical unit that carries a multi-layered meaning both as an actor in the social gender system and in cultural, ideological, physical, and relational planes. The word's collocations extend across a broad semantic field, including descriptive characteristics, social roles, political discourse, cultural affiliations, and narrative usage.

Collocational patterns of the word "karı"

Table 7 shows the collocation distribution of the word "karı."

Table 7. Collocational patterns of "karı" in the TNC.

Theme	Collocation examples	Explanation/ Semantic Function
1.Fixed expressions	*karı koca*, *koca karı*	The phrase "karı koca" is an established idiom and is neutral/marriage-related; "koca karı" is a pejorative phrase with negative connotations, meaning an old/grumpy woman.
2.Pejorative/ Slang Descriptors	*manyak karı*, *pislik karı*, *aşağılık karı*, *cahil karı*, *salak karı*, *cadı karı*	It shows that the word is used intensively in slang and low-status discourse, and that female identity is targeted for the purpose of insult and belittlement.

3.Derogatory Comparative Structures	*karı gibi zırlamak*, *karı gibi gülmek*, *karı gibi ağlamak*, *karı gibi küpe takmak*, *karı gibi zıplamak*, *karı gibi saç uzatmak*	These structures, constructed with the preposition "gibi," reinforce male norms by presenting behaviors associated with femininity as negative examples.
4.Age and physical description	*genç karı*, *yaşlı karı*, *... yaşında karı*	It reflects contexts in which women are evaluated and judged based on their physical appearance, age, and social norms.
5. Objectification / Ownership Relationships	*benim karı*, *onun karı*, *bir karı almış*	It demonstrates a masculine discourse that positions women as possessions; the subject position is given to men, the object position to women.
6.Gender opposition	*erkek karı*, *karı adam*, *adam karı*	Contexts in which gender roles and behavioral patterns are coded through opposition or conflict; in most cases, they contain a pejorative evaluation.
7. Conflictual and Slang Speech Patterns	*böyle karı*, *hiçbir karı*, *nasıl karı*, *lan karı*, *karı dedim*	It indicates that the word is used intensively in the contexts of debate, confrontation, insults, and everyday slang.
8. Narrative and Dialogue context	*karı dedim*, *karı vardı*, *karı söyledi*, *karı geldi*	The word is used in stories, oral narratives, and character-centered dialogues, mostly in a critical or sarcastic context.

The analysis of concordance lines obtained from the TNC using a corpus-driven approach shows that the word "karı" has a distinctly different discursive profile in Turkish compared to the other two words. The collocation network reveals that the word is particularly concentrated in the areas of slang, negative evaluation, conflictual discourse, objectification, and social gender hierarchy.

The first notable feature in the analysis is that the most prominent collocation of the word karı is the phrase "karı koca" (husband and wife). This phrase is an established and fixed structure in Turkish, and is one of the synonymous uses of the word in the context of marriage. However, the phrase "koca karı" (old hag), constructed in reverse order, is also frequently seen in the indexes. This structure is not a synonymous phrase; rather, it has historically acquired negative connotations and has become established in the lexicon as a pejorative expression referring to old, grumpy, or unwanted women. Therefore, the same two lexical elements appear both in a neutral marital dilemma and in a clearly negative evaluative structure, demonstrating the word's meaning load, which varies from context to context.

The second distinct pattern group consists of pejorative and slang descriptors that regularly recur to the left of the word "karı." Expressions such as "manyak karı" (crazy woman), "pislik karı" (filthy woman), "aşağılık karı" (worthless woman), "cahil karı" (ignorant woman), "aptal karı" (stupid woman), and "cadı karı" (witch woman) appear with high frequency in the concordances. These structures demonstrate that the word is used in Turkish with clear functions of insult, belittlement, devaluation, and othering. While equivalents such as "aptal herif" (stupid guy) or "serseri adam" (punk man) are encountered in slang discourse, it is observed that such characterizations emerge in a more intense, more aggressive, and more explicit manner in the word "karı."

Another striking pattern is the repeated use of phrases such as "benim karı" (my wife) in the lines. This structure demonstrates that the grammatical structure indicating ownership is used in contexts where women are objectified within gender relations and positioned as "something owned." The discourse here is not about ownership in the sense of a "spousal relationship," but rather a linguistic reflection of a patriarchal mindset that positions women as property or possessions. At the level of discourse, this usage creates a framework that centers the male rather than the female subject, establishing a hierarchical and one-sided relationship.

Another prominent area of the collocation network consists of constructions formed with the preposition "gibi" (like) that turn women into objects of demeaning comparison. Examples such as "karı gibi zırlamak" (to whine like a woman), "karı gibi ağlamak" (to cry like a woman), "karı gibi gülmek" (to laugh like a woman), "karı gibi küpe takmak" (to wear earrings like a woman), "karı gibi zıplamak" (to jump like a woman), and "karı gibi saç uzatmak" (to grow hair like a woman) are repeated in the indexes. All of these structures show that certain behaviors associated with womanhood are coded within social norms as forms of behavior that are "weak," "emotional," "inappropriate," or "unbecoming of a man." Therefore, the "like a woman" structure is not only a pejorative simile but also a discursive mechanism that reproduces social gender norms.

Finally, when examining collocations found in the positive context of the word "karı," it is seen that discursive patterns specific to narrative and verbal debate contexts are concentrated. Expressions such as "böyle karı" (such a woman), "hiçbir karı" (no woman), "nasıl karı" (what kind of a woman), "… yaşında karı" (…aged woman) show that the word is generally used in contexts involving conflict, criticism, mockery, or complaint. Elements such as "koca" (husband), "kocalar" (husbands), and "adam" (man) in the right context support the word's position within gender relations; however, this association is not symmetrical and reciprocal as it is with the word "kadın." On the contrary, discourse mostly produces a hierarchical, male-centered, and condescending framework.

When all findings are evaluated together, the collocation network of the word "karı" reveals a much more pronounced pejorative, slang, aggressive, and socially gender-unequal discursive profile compared to the other two words. Apart from the word's use in fixed phrases like "karı koca" (wife and husband), its association with pejorative adjectives and derogatory metaphors demonstrate that the use of "karı" in Turkish carries a significantly derogatory social prosody.

Semantic Preferences

This section examines the semantic preference patterns exhibited by the words bayan, kadın, and karı in light of corpus-driven analyses conducted on concordance lines obtained from the TNC. Semantic preference is a concept that reveals the semantic fields of words that co-occur with a given word and how these fields influence the meaning of that word. As emphasized by Sinclair (2004) and Stubbs (2001), semantic preference highlights not only individual collocations but also the semantic clusters collectively indicated by these collocations. In this context, it can be seen that the three words have completely different semantic orientations in Turkish. Findings on semantic preferences are illustrated in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Semantic preferences of "bayan," "kadın" and "karı"

Node	Semantic Preference Medium	Examplary collocates/ patterns
Bayan	Official, corporate, neutral; classification and courtesy-focused areas	*bayan sporcu*, *bayan öğretmen*, *bayan takımı*, *güzel bayan*
Kadın	Multi-layered: physical description, emotional evaluation, family/motherhood roles, cultural identities, social/political spheres	*genç kadın*, *zavallı kadın*, *kadın ve çocuklar*, *Türk kadını*, *kadın hakları*
Karı	Pejorative, slang, confrontational, and derogatory discourse areas; ownership and norm imposition	*manyak karı*, *koca karı*, *benim karı*, *karı gibi ağlamak*, *karı koca*

First, the word "bayan" clearly leans toward a formal, institutional, and neutral semantic preference. Collocation analysis shows that the word is concentrated in the contexts of sports, bureaucracy, and classification ("bayan takımı," "bayan sporcu," "bayan voleybolcu," etc.). The semantic cluster indicated by this usage area is clustered around the axes of order, formality, category labeling, and social politeness. In addition, although the word matches a limited number of positive or neutral adjectives (beautiful, young, well-groomed, etc.), it generally prefers a non-emotional, distant discourse field. Therefore, the semantic preference of the word "bayan" is clearly related to a neutral-formal semantic field.

However, the word "kadın" produces a fairly broad, multi-layered, and socially dense semantic field in terms of semantic preference. Collocation findings show that the word is oriented towards both a physical and age-based description field (young, old, elderly, beautiful, etc.) and emotional/evaluative fields (innocent, poor, helpless, unfortunate, etc.). In addition, the word "kadın" strongly corresponds to semantic fields based on mother-child relationships, family roles, and caregiving. Similarly, collocations such as "Türk kadını" (Turkish woman), "Ermeni kadın" (Armenian woman), "Avrupalı kadın" (European woman) show that female identity is associated with cultural and national categories of representation. Furthermore, "kadın hakları" (women's rights), "cinsel şiddet" (sexual violence), and "kadın birlikteliği" (solidarity among women) place the word directly at the center of debates in the social, political, and public spheres. This situation demonstrates that the semantic preference of the word "kadın" points to a multifaceted cluster that encompasses physical, cultural, social, emotional, and political domains.

The word "karı" is clearly distinct from the other two words in terms of semantic preference and is explicitly associated with a pejorative, slang, and conflictual semantic field. Collocation patterns reveal that the word is particularly paired with adjectives focused on insult, belittlement, and devaluation. In addition, structures such as "karı gibi zırlamak" (whining like a woman), "karı gibi ağlamak" (crying like a woman), and "karı gibi gülmek" (laughing like a woman) demonstrate that the word functions as a negative comparison and imposition of norms based on "womanhood." Phrases such as "my wife" indicate a masculine discourse in which women are positioned as "objectified" within a relationship of ownership. The fact that the word matches a negative semantic field in the expression "koca karı" (old hag) and a neutral semantic field in the expression "husband and wife" also reveals the context-dependent nature of semantic preference. However, the general pattern shows that the word predominantly tends towards slang, negative evaluation, conflict, and belittlement.

When evaluated generally, the semantic preference profiles of the three words reflect three different areas of discourse related to femininity in Turkish. The word "bayan" is concentrated in neutral and institutional areas; the word "kadın" is concentrated in social, cultural, physical, and emotional multi-layered areas; and the word "karı" is concentrated in pejorative and slang areas of discourse. Thus, semantic preference analysis clearly demonstrates that these three words differ not only in meaning but also in terms of social representation, value connotation, and discursive function.

Semantic Prosodies

This section examines the semantic prosody patterns exhibited by the words bayan, kadın, and karı through corpus-driven analyses conducted on TNC data. Stubbs (2001) and Sinclair (2004) define the concept of semantic prosody as the emotional orientation, value judgment, and discursive attitude that a word acquires not statistically but through its regular syntactic environment. In this context, semantic prosody reveals implicit attitudes that are not found directly in the dictionary meaning of a word, but are attributed to the word by the linguistic community through usage patterns.

When examined in this context, the usage of these three words in Turkish is distinctly different from one another. First, it is observed that the semantic prosody of the word "bayan" is largely neutral or slightly positive. A collocation analysis shows that the word is frequently used in formal, institutional, and classificatory contexts. This usage context lends the word a distanced, low-emotional-load prosody focused on politeness/etiquette. Although there are a limited number of positive descriptions in the concordances, it is thought that these examples are not significant enough to change the general prosody of the word. Therefore, it can be argued that the word bayan does not carry a distinct positive or negative connotation in Turkish; rather, it exhibits a neutral, distant, and formal prosody.

However, the semantic prosody of the word "kadın" is quite complex, multifaceted, and context-sensitive. Some collocation patterns point to areas with positive or neutral values. However,

emotional value loadings such as poor woman, innocent woman, unfortunate woman, and miserable woman reveal that the word is often associated with an emotional, fragile, victimized subject. Furthermore, the word's frequent use in contexts of social inequality, violence, victimization, and political debate suggests that its prosody is not one-dimensional. Prosody extends to both positive and negative as well as neutral areas. As a result, the word has an emotionally charged, multi-layered, and context-dependent prosody in Turkish.

The word "karı" stands out sharply from the other two words and clearly exhibits negative, derogatory, and aggressive semantic prosody. Collocation analysis shows that the word is used with pejorative adjectives in almost all contexts. These collocations give the word a negative prosody due to their direct tendency toward insult, devaluation, and othering. Structures reflecting gender-based degradation show that the word not only carries a negative value, but also contains a prosody that reinforces sexist, normative, and patriarchal discourse. Furthermore, findings reflecting a masculine attitude that objectifies women within a relationship of ownership clearly demonstrate that the semantic prosody of the word "karı" is not only negative but also exclusionary, demeaning, and socially hierarchical in character.

Conclusion

This study presents a comparative analysis of the Turkish words bayan, kadın, and karı, which refer to women at the levels of colligation, collocation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody, using concordance lines obtained from the Turkish National Corpus (TNC). In line with the corpus-driven approach, data-based multiple readings, category formation, and pattern extraction processes have shown that the usage of these three words in Turkish is distinctly differentiated not only at the lexical level but also in terms of social representation, discourse practices, and value loads.

Analyses have revealed that the word "bayan" primarily has a formal, classificatory, and neutral usage. The fact that the word is used more in the contexts of sports, institutions, bureaucracy, and social politeness indicates that a neutral and distant semantic preference is preferred. In this context, the word "bayan" does not carry a distinct positive or negative prosody; rather, it serves more labeling and institutional functions.

However, the word "kadın" has a very broad, multi-layered, and emotionally charged usage in Turkish. Collocation and co-location findings show that the word is strongly associated with many semantic clusters, such as physical description, social roles, cultural identities, political discourse, and emotional evaluations. Within this framework, the semantic prosody of the word "kadın" varies from context to context, exhibiting a multifaceted structure that encompasses positive, negative, and neutral connotations simultaneously.

The word "karı" stands out distinctly from the other two words and clearly exhibits a pejorative, slang, and aggressive usage pattern. Its frequent use with insulting adjectives, derogatory comparisons, and objectifying possessive expressions reveals that the word carries a strongly negative prosody in terms of gender. Furthermore, fixed pairs such as "karı koca" (wife and husband) and "koca karı" (old hag) have made the context-determining aspect of prosody visible.

What these findings generally show is that the selection of female-referential words in Turkish is influenced not only by lexical differences but also by broader sociolinguistic processes such as social representation, value attribution, gender ideology, and discursive positioning. Therefore, the study does not merely reveal a lexical-semantic distinction, but also makes visible how discourses related to womanhood are produced in Turkish, through which patterns they are recirculated, and which words legitimize which social positions. In this respect, the findings show that word choice plays a decisive role in discourse construction in gender studies; it allows for broader conclusions to be drawn about how women are represented in different practices such as media language, everyday speech, literature, and online interaction.

Limitations of the study

However, the study has certain limitations. The analysis is limited to the types of written text provided by the TNC and does not cover spoken data or the rapidly changing patterns of social media language. Furthermore, the manual review required by the corpus-driven approach, while allowing for in-depth observation, carries the risk of overlooking recurring patterns in larger data subsets due to time constraints. Finally, although the three words reveal clear contrasts in Turkish usage, different dialects, regional variations, or intergenerational differences in usage are not included in the scope of this study.

Implications of the study

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study demonstrate that the framework of expanded lexical units offered by the compilation-based approach provides a powerful analytical tool for revealing subtle semantic and performative differences between words with similar reference domains. The distinct differentiation of the words kadın, bayan, and karı at the levels of colligation, collocation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody reveals that meaning is shaped not only at the lexical level but also through patterns of usage. From a pedagogical perspective, these findings indicate that, particularly in the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language and in native language education, the instruction of vocabulary should not focus solely on word meanings but also on the contextual usage of these words, their collocation patterns, and the social/ideological connotations they carry. Such an approach can support learners in grasping the nuanced differences in meaning within the language and developing more appropriate, context-sensitive language use.

Suggestions for further studies

Finally, several suggestions can be made for future studies. First, other female-referential words in Turkish (such as "hanım," "hatun," and "kız") can be examined using a similar methodology, making it possible to map a broader range of discourse related to womanhood. Second, more dynamic data obtained from social media, comment boards, and online forums could reveal prosodic shifts in the current usage of the word "karı" or new slang derivatives. Third, comparative studies could reveal similarities and differences between Turkish usage and female-referential words in languages such as English, German, Persian, or Arabic.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Declaration of AI Use

Any AI-assisted tools, if used, were limited to language editing. No AI tools were used for data collection, analysis, or interpretation of findings. The author(s) assume sole responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and final content of the manuscript.

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