



## **Analysis of the *Yağmur* Coursebooks Used in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language in terms of Word Frequency and the Context of Common European Language Reference**

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**Abstract:** Learning the language, which is one of the most central assets of humanity, is a considerably tough and arduous process. With the increase in the interaction among countries due to globalization, language learning activities have also gained pace. There are several academic works on methodology in learning Turkish as a foreign language, and one of those is word frequency research. Word frequency studies identify frequently used words in a language. In the study titled "Analysis of the *Yağmur* Coursebooks Used in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language in terms of Vocabulary Frequency and the Context of Common European Language Reference", the subject of teaching Turkish to foreigners has been discussed, and a document review study has been conducted on teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Word frequency study has been conducted by taking the first and second coursebooks of the *Yağmur* Turkish Teaching Set, published by Nev Lisan Publishing in 2017, as a reference to cover the A1 and A2 levels. Cibakaya program version 2.3, a frequency software developed for Turkish language by Ceval Kaya, has been used in this study. Considering the findings, the words are grouped under nine categories i.e., noun, verb, adjective, gerund, conjunction, adverb, pronoun, preposition, and interjection/fixed expression, and the word frequencies are separately presented. In this context, it has been concluded that teaching the nouns of concrete objects from the immediate environment, especially at the A1 level, is highly important. It is understood that the teaching of other word types starts right after the teaching the nouns of objects.

**Keywords:** *Word Frequency; Common European Language Reference; Foreign Language; Teaching Turkish.*

### **Introduction**

One of the most vital questions about human life is when they found language as a means of communication, when they attempted to impose rules on language, and how the current structure of language was created within the forms of communicative understanding. No matter how much research linguists do on this subject, there is no tangible information about how humans understood or used language before they invented writing. Language has preserved and maintained its significance progressively since the day it claimed its place in human life. The importance of language also stems from it being always a need and the only resource that responds to this need (Schmidt, 2000: 1). In this context, the formation of languages and their foundations evade thorough explanation.

Language provides communication between people, plays an intermediary role in the wholesome and regular achievement of this communication, and ensures the recognition of society through culture. Because of their thinking and feeling abilities, humans use language when communicating with one another. The way of expression takes on a style through key concepts such as words, signs, sounds and symbols in the language. Language expresses the most comprehensively structured form of this style. The ability of humans to get along with one another worldwide and to express themselves in a language depends on the ability to use the vocabulary of the target language well (Aksan, 1998:1).

A foreign language is a second language different from one's mother tongue. When humans acquire the language of the society in which they were born, this language becomes their mother tongue. One has a command of their mother tongue, in which they attain stability in terms of time and space. A foreign language, on the other hand, is a language that has rules different from the mother tongue, gains functionality with these rules, and therefore expresses a form of agreement distant to the person. Learning a foreign language equals learning a different form of understanding, rules, word and sentence structure, the society in which that language is spoken, and the culture of that society (Schmidt, 2000: 3).

Language units have word meaning and function, and are also ready to be processed with inflectional suffixes. Since humans are social beings, they express their feelings, thoughts and wishes with language. The language that people use while doing this comprises various units, as language is also a structure with the ability to understand and explain. One unit that make up language is words. Words reveal the vocabulary of a language. The quantity and quality of the words in a language, and the number and everything they want to express are the treasures of a language (Armut, 2019: 729).

The key importance of vocabulary teaching in foreign language education is the necessity of comprehending the words, which are the smallest building blocks of the language, to communicate adequately in the target language. The basis of language learning is the motivation to communicate between individuals. As vocabulary learning increases, the learner gradually masters the language. Vocabulary learning is vital because it enables learners to form sentences and

express themselves in fluent use of language (Yüce, 2005: 85).

The main purpose in foreign language teaching is to enable the learners to learn the target language in terms of reading, writing, speaking, and listening to achieve mastery of language skills through which they in every respect can express themselves in the target language. While learning a foreign language, the basic condition for mastering that language is to learn the words, which are the basic elements of the language, accurately. The vocabulary enrichment also means the development of language skills directly and indirectly. Developing language skills starts with the learning of the words in the target language and ends with the provision of accurate reading, writing, understanding, and speaking in the respective language (Memiş, 2018: 1280).

The experience of retention in a learner's memory during learning a word is the most basic indicator of the data they have learned about a language. Vocabulary is the enrichment of linguistic information. Vocabulary is not only vocabulary itself; it is also the basic form of the words in a language, their foreign origin, the way they are used in the fields of art and science, and committing the respective word to memory so it reflects the culture (Özbay and Melanlıoğlu, 2008: 33).

Use of frequency studies in teaching Turkish to foreigners ensures the easy comprehension of the language and its teaching through the frequently-used words. Commonly used words in the language are the words people who know and speak the language often refer to while expressing themselves and communicating. The more these words are learned, the

more the familiarity with the language increases. This, in turn, will increase the desire to learn the language. In consequence, frequently-used words will also enable learning the language from easy to difficult and contribute positively to the language comprehension process (Sevim and İşcan, 2012: 1865).

The main reference of word frequency studies is words. These studies based on determining the words in a language according to the frequency of use also express the reflection of the language in thought, the oft-visited issues in the language and the manner of expressing them. Understanding texts in a language depends on understanding words. Frequency studies are included in linguistic studies carried out to understand words. In a manner of expression, word frequency studies check the feasibility of a language (Aslangilay, 2019: 44).

With globalization, foreign language teaching gained momentum. Studies on teaching language and culture, especially among the European Union countries, gained pace and brought about the Council of Europe Cultural Cooperation Commission in 1971 to work for this purpose. These studies have made it possible for a European commonwealth of countries to understand one another in terms of language, culture, lifestyle and even frameworks of thought, and have facilitated diverse communities to live under a common culture. These studies resulted the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in 2001. This text, originally titled as *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and usually abbreviated as CEFR, has been translated into Turkish under different titles. For example, *Ortak Dil Çerçevesi* (Common Language Framework), *Avrupa Ortak Dil Çerçevesi* (European

Common Language Framework) and *Ortak Öneriler Çerçevesi* (Common Recommendations Framework) are among the well-known titles of translations (Akyol, 2013: 18). Such studies bear significance in terms of determining what words should be taught in Turkish as a Foreign Language coursebooks within the scope of A1 and A2 level basic language skills of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

## Methods

### Research Method

Within the scope of qualitative research, descriptive survey model was used in the study. The descriptive survey model, which practices the scrutiny of a situation as it exists, is a model that evaluates all subjected to a research in the conditions they are in, and deals with observing and determining what is desired to be known (King and He, 2005). The data in the research is the document analysis method, one of the qualitative research data collection techniques. In this analysis method, the documents used in the research are examined, the data are collected through the documents, the findings are interpreted and the study is concluded. It is carried out by examining the resources formed in a lifetime (Scott and Morrison, 2005).

### Population and Sample

The population of the research consists of teaching books in Turkish as a Foreign Language. The textbook chosen as the sample in this study was obtained from the publishing house named Nev Lisan Yayınları. The cited document was randomly selected among the primary and secondary school level Turkish coursebooks. The teaching set is for the primary and the secondary school students between the ages of 12

and 18 who learn Turkish as a foreign language. In this context, the first and the second coursebooks of Yağmur Turkish Teaching et graded for A1 and A2 levels were taken as a sample.

### Data Collection and Analysis

The first and second coursebooks of Yağmur Turkish Teaching Set were purchased. These coursebooks published in 2017 were later converted to PDF format by removing all images and were saved as Word files. The usage of each word in the books was examined and the usage of the phrases was defined. In the next step, all the words were arranged in their own phrases according to the order of use. In this way, it was determined which words were used most frequently in each phrase. In addition, the number of different words used in each word type phrase and the word diversity were determined. In the data analysis process, content analysis was made to extract descriptive analysis results.

Before starting the collection, organization and analysis of the data, the words were arranged and placed in a compatible format to be processed by the software package named Cibakaya. Cibakaya is a frequency software developed by Ceval Kaya for Turkish language. According to the outputs from this software used in language research, the results listing the most frequently used words in any category, especially in the index section, were displayed.

### Findings and Discussions

As a result of the analysis of the data in the research, these findings were obtained:

**Table 1**

*Classification by the Total Number of Word Types*

Word Type	N	%
Noun	13 091	49,43
Verb	4 433	14,19
Adjective	3 912	13,90
Gerund	2 011	12,63
Conjunction	1 782	3,12
Adverb	1 622	3,10
Pronoun	1 209	2,01
Preposition	455	0,96
Interjection / Fixed Expression	311	0,66
Total	28 826	100

The table above shows the classification of the word types according to their total appearance in the book. The word types are grouped under nine categories: noun, verb, adjective, gerund, conjunction, adverb, pronoun, preposition, exclamation/ fixed expression. Nouns are the most common word types with 49.43%. Names appear at many instances across the books. Verbs occupy the second place with 14.19%, and adjectives are in the third place with 13.90%. When viewed in the Common European Language Reference Text, concrete object names related to a learner's immediate environment are included in basic language skills at A1 and A1 levels. The A1 level mostly includes teaching the names of objects and therefore, the number of object names is high. The learners who learn the names of the objects will find it easier to comprehend the actions formed by replacing the object nouns. Therefore, it is necessary to learn the name of an object at a certain level order to move on to tenses. Although there are transitions to verbs with the introduction to tenses, the verbs used at the A1 and the A2 levels remain at a certain rate. For other word types, except for adjectives, the A1 and the A2 levels are still early, so their rates also low in this study.

Armut (2018), in his research titled "*Bir Sözcük Sıklığı Çalışması ve Türkiye'deki Mülteci Öğrenciler*" (A Study of Word Frequency and Refugee Students in Turkey), obtained similar results in the frequency study on a 6th grade textbook. Words are listed according to their types as noun (43.43%), verb (14.43%), adjective (13.90%), gerund (10.46%), conjunction (5.95%), adverb (5.64), pronoun (%) 4.22), preposition/discourse marker (1.55%), exclamation/fixe expression (0.39%).

**Table 2***Variation in Word Types*

Word Type	N	%
Noun	4217	43,50
Verb	1900	24,09
Adjective	819	12,44
Gerund	810	12,10
Conjunction	101	6,11
Adverb	44	0,59
Pronoun	40	0,58
Preposition	21	0,30
Interjection / Fixed Expression	20	0,21
Total	7881	100

Considering the variation in the word types in Table 2, nouns vary the most within themselves. Verbs take the second place and adjectives follow in the third. While analyzing the data in Table 1, the software picked the repeated words in the books while calculating the ratio. For example, if the word 'okul' was mentioned 5 times, it was rated as 5 separate words. In Table 2, each word is picked once and included in the ratio. Therefore, it is an expected result for nouns to register a higher ratio with 43.50%. That verbs and adjectives follow respectively is in parallel with the topic content and the topics specified in the Common European Language Reference Text. The results obtained are

consistent with the description in the European Common Language Reference for the A1 Listening level, "If the people speak slowly and clearly, I can understand easy words and popular expressions about myself, my family and my concrete and immediate environment" (CEFR, 2018: 102).

**Table 3***Most Repeated Verbs*

Word	N
Ol-	281
Et-	162
De-	144
Gel-	100
Al-	100
Git-	100
Başla-	96
Bil-	93
Ver-	91
Aç-	84
Çık-	62
Yap-	55
İste-	41
Bak-	38
Bul-	22
Sev-	11
Öğren-	11
(Others)	10

The word "olmak" is found to be the most frequently repeated verb in the A1 and the A2 books. In the study titled "*Türkçede En Çok Kullanılan 1000 Kelime*" (The 1000 Most Used Words in Turkish), the verb "olmak" appears 10 times (with its conjugations) (turkceogretimi, 2021). It is possible to observe that the verbs are sequenced in parallel with the street conversations the individual had on the street daily. In this context, the research titled "*Türkçede En Çok Kullanılan 200 Fiil*" (200 Most Used Verbs in Turkish), provided the following ranking:

açılmak, açmak, ağlamak, akmak,  
almak, anlamak, anlatmak, aramak,  
artmak, aşmak, atılmak, atmak,  
ayırılmak, azalmak, bağılmak,  
bağlamak, bakmak, basmak, başlamak,

beklemek, belirlemek, belirlenmek, belirtmek, benzemek, bırakmak, bilinmek, bilmek, binmek, bitirmek, bitmek, bozulmak, bulmak, bulunmak, büyüme, çalışmak, çalmak, çekilmek, çekmek, çevirmek, çıkarılmak, çıkarmak, çıkmak çizmek, dayanmak, değerlendirmek, değişmek, değiştirmek, demek, devam etmek, dikkat etmek, dilemek, dinlemek, doğmak, dolaşmak, doldurmak, dönmek, dönüşmek, durmak, duymak, düşmek, düşünmek, düzenlemek, eklemek, etkilemek, etmek, evlenmek, fark etmek, geçirmek, geçmek, gelişmek, geliştirmek gelmek, gerçekleşmek, gerekmek, getirmek, girmek, gitmek, giymek, göndermek, görmek, görünmek, görüşmek, göstermek, götürmek, gülmek, hareket etmek, hatırlamak, hazırlamak, hazırlanmak, hissetmek, içmek, ifade etmek, ilerlemek, ilgilenmek, inanmak, incelemek, inmek, istemek, istenmek, izlemek, kabul etmek, kaçmak, kaldırmak, kalkmak, kalmak, kapanmak, kapatmak, karışmak, karıştırmak, karşılamak, karşılaşmak, katılmak, kaybetmek, kazanmak, kesilmek, kesmek, kılmak, konuşmak, korkmak, korumak, koşmak, koymak, kullanılmak, kullanmak, kurmak, kurtarmak, kurtulmak, kurulmak, okumak, olmak, oluşmak, oturmak, oynamak, ödemek, öğrenmek, öldürmek, ölmek, paylaşmak, sağlamak, sağlanmak, sahip olmak, sanmak, satın almak, satmak, saymak, seçmek, sevmek, seyretmek, sokmak, sormak, söylemek, söylenmek, söz etmek, sunmak, sunulmak, sürdürmek, sürmek, tanımak, taşımak, tercih etmek, toplamak, toplanmak, tutmak, tutulmak, uğraşmak, ulaşmak, unutmak, uygulamak, uygulanmak, uymak, uyumak, uzanmak, uzatmak, üretmek, varmak, verilme, vermek, vurmak, yakalamak, yaklaşmak, yakmak, yanmak, yapılmak, yapmak, yaptırmak, yararlanmak, yaratmak, yardımcı olmak, yaşamak, yatmak, yayılmak, yayımlanmak, yazılmak, yasmak, yemek, yetmek, yükselmek, yürümek (turkceogretimi, 2021).

It is observed that the verbs in Table 3 are in this ranking. When we look at the competencies for basic language skills at the A1 and A2 levels as specified in

the Common European Language Reference, it is noticed that the defined verbs have the mentioned qualities: “Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and fairly simple sentences aimed at meeting concrete needs. Can introduce themselves and introduce others. Can understand phrases and frequently used expressions related to interests (for example, information about the person and family, shopping, work, and immediate surroundings) (CEFR, 2018: 75).

**Table 4**

*Most Repeated Gerunds*

Word	N
Olduk	101
Olan	78
Olmak	48
Olma	45
Yapma	44
Etme	42
Demek	40
Eden	11
Dönen	10
(Others)	10

Regarding the most used gerunds in the books, some observe that the gerund "*olduk*" has the first place, "*olan*" comes the second, and "*olmak*" follows as the third. Since these gerunds are derived from the most used verb "*olmak*", it is noticed that the most used ones are also similar. It is slightly earlier for the A1 and the A2 levels to cover gerunds. Therefore, considering the repetition rate of gerunds in the book, using gerunds so much frequently at the A1 and the A2 levels is also open to criticism.

**Table 5***Most Repeated Adjectives*

Word	N
Bir	691
Bu	511
O	314
Her	209
İlk	101
Büyük	99
İki	95
Son	82
Üç	76
Tek	40
Tüm	40
Şu	40
Hiçbiri	32
(Others)	10

Considering the most repeated adjectives in the book, the adjective "bir" occupies the first place. A word frequently used in daily life, like in "bir şey, bir gün, bir kalem", "bir" is highlighted as the most essential adjective to be learned in the book. The demonstrative pronouns "Bu, şu and o" are one of the core topics of the A1 level. Adjectives consisting of a number group are frequently used while teaching numbers at the A1 level. "Tüm, son, ilk" adjectives are very common pronouns in Turkish. The adjective "Büyük" is naturally one of the most frequently used adjectives taught from the A1 level onwards.

**Table 6***Most Repeated Adverbs*

Word	N
Çok	166
Hep	129
Sonra	90
Diye	86
Hiç	75
En	66
Pek	50
(Others)	25

Adverbs are placed before verbs to augment their meanings. Among the most frequently used adverbs in the A1 and the A2 books, "çok" comes first, followed by "hep" and "sonra". In his thesis titled, "Batı Avrupa'da İki Dilli Türk Çocuklarının Yazılı Türkçe Kelime Sıklıkları: Fransa Örneği" (Written Turkish Word Frequency of Bilingual Turkish Children in Western Europe: The Case of France) Bilgiç (2016) found that the adverb "hep" was repeated 54 times among the Words Repeated Between 0-100 Times, "çok" was repeated 780 times among the Words Repeated Between 700-800 Times, "sonra" was repeated 1544 times among the Words Repeated for 1000 or More Times, and "hiç" was repeated for 102 times among the Words Repeated Between 100-200 Times. Therefore, it is possible to say that frequently used adverbs are similar.

**Table 7***Most Repeated Prepositions*

Word	N
İçin	190
Gibi	121
(Others)	80

The two prepositions, "için" and "gibi" are prominent not only being most repeated prepositions in the book but also for their frequent use in daily life, especially for declaring a purpose. However, for the A1 and the A2 levels, it is possible to list "kadar, ile, yalnız, göre" among the frequently-taught prepositions.

**Table 8***Most Repeated Conjunctions*

Word	N
ve	716
ile	499
de	201
ama	102
fakat	88
(Others)	20

The most frequently used conjunctions in the book are "ve", "ile" and "de". In addition, conjunctions like *eğer*, *hatta*, and *çünkü* listed under Others are averagely used. In their study titled, "*Yabancı Dil Olarak Türkçe Öğretiminde Temel Seviyede Bağlaçlara Yer Verilmesi*" (Inclusion of Conjunctions at the Basic Level in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language) on the A1 and the A2 level Turkish as a Foreign Language coursebooks, Kum and Gönül (2020) listed the conjunctions with the highest frequency of use as *ama*, *çünkü*, *ile*, *ve*, and *de/da*. These results are in parallel with the research findings.

**Table 9***Most Repeated Interjections and Fixed Expressions*

Word	N
Merhaba	29
Hadi	18
(Others)	10

Interjections or fixed expressions are frequently used in daily life, especially in conversations. In the A1 and the A2 level Turkish teaching coursebooks the use of interjections and fixed expressions is infrequent due to the basic level of conversations. In both Yağmur Turkish coursebooks, taken as a reference for this study, the most frequently used interjections and fixed expressions were "*merhaba*" and "*hadi*". Interjections

are difficult to grasp for the the A1 and the A2 level learners. Therefore, when the findings are examined, it is seen that interjections have low frequency.

**Table 10***Most Repeated Pronouns*

Word	N
Ben	288
O	160
Sen	151
Herkes	120
Biz	100
Siz	82
Onlar	60
Biri	55
(Others)	20

The most used pronouns in the textbook were ranked as " *ben*, *sen* and *o*" and their plurals "*biz*, *siz*, *onlar*". Personal pronouns are among the main topics for the A1 and the A2 levels. The teaching of case suffixes is done through personal suffixes. In the "*Yazılı Türkçenin Kelime Sıklığı Sözlüğü*" (Word Frequency Dictionary of Written Turkish) by Göz (2003), it is possible to find personal pronouns among the top 100 words and their frequencies. Considering the acquisitions to be acquired in basic language skills at the A1 and the A2 levels, it is very natural that personal pronouns are frequently used at these levels.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

According to the findings in this study, it has been observed that there are nine categories of words in the selected coursebooks: noun, verb, adjective, gerund, conjunction, adverb, pronoun, preposition, interjection/fixed expression. Examining the frequency of these words reveals that the words under the noun category are used the most, and the teaching of the nouns is followed by the teaching of the other word types. Since the main roots in a language are



nouns, it is a natural process of a language to teach vocabulary by teaching of the names of objects.

The most used words in the verb category are “*olmak, etmek* and *demek*”. The most used words in the gerund category are “*olduk, olan, and olmak*” and the most used words in the adjective category are “*bir, bu, and o*”. The most used words in the adverb category are “*çok, hep, and sonra*”, while the most used words in the preposition category are “*için* and *gibi*”. The most used conjunctions are “*ve, ile, and de*”, the most used interjections and fixed expressions are “*merhaba* and *hadi*”, and the most repeated pronouns are “*ben, o* and *sen*”.

As a result of the study conducted on the two volumes of Yağmur coursebooks, it is observed that the frequently used words in the books are compatible

with the basic language skills specified in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Considering the word frequency studies, it should be ensured that the words are included in the coursebooks so they are compatible with the topic content.

To ensure student motivation, what will be taught especially at the A1 and the A2 levels should be chosen from the words frequently used in daily life.

Frequent repetition and reinforcement of words prevent strengthens the retention of words. Therefore, this should be considered while distributing the frequency of word use among the topics.

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