

## Book Review: A Vocabulary Proposal Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages towards Turkish A1 and A2 Levels

### Kitap İncelemesi: Türkçe A1 ve A2 Düzeylerine Yönelik Diller İçin Avrupa Ortak Öneriler Çerçevesi ile Uyumlanmış Bir Söz Varlığı Önerisi

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to introduce Prof. Nihal Çalışkan's study entitled A Vocabulary Proposal Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages towards Turkish A1 and A2 Levels. The teaching of Turkish that has made a rapid improvement in recent years draws a great deal of attention as a foreign/second language. Nonetheless, the lack of word/ vocabulary lists stands out in this field. This study that is based on corpus linguistics, Çalışkan's field of study, and her own language learning experiences has been built on the idea that vocabulary is important in the acquisition of language skills, yet that a certain part of it should be taught as a priority in the face of the broad volume of the elements of vocabulary. In this study, which was meticulously carried out in line with the principle of transparency by examining current textbooks, the word was considered as an orthographic unit. This study was conducted in three phases and reached 1152 words at the A1 level and 1653 words at the A2 level. In the list prepared, the vocabulary elements were basically divided into two groups "words" and "units that exceed the limits of word". The units that exceed the limits of word were further subdivided into four categories: "morpheme units", "lexical units", "syntactic units" and "discourse units". The words determined based on prevalence criteria were aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). All units are exemplified by sentences generated by the author herself.

**Keywords:** Teaching Turkish to foreigners, book introduction, vocabulary.

**ÖZ:** Bu çalışmada Prof. Dr. Nihal Çalışkan'ın Türkçe A1 ve A2 Düzeylerine Yönelik Diller İçin Avrupa Ortak Öneriler Çerçevesi ile Uyumlanmış Bir Söz Varlığı başlıklı çalışmasının tanıtımı amaçlanmıştır. Son yıllarda hızlı bir ilerleme kaydeden Türkçenin yabancı/ikinci dil olarak öğretimi oldukça büyük bir ilgi görmektedir. Görülen bu ilgiye karşın alanda sözcük/söz varlığı listelerinin eksikliği hissedilmektedir. Çalışkan'ın çalışma alanı olan derlem bilim ve kendi dil öğrenme tecrübelerinden beslenen çalışmanın çıkış noktası, dil becerilerinin ediniminde söz varlığının önemli olduğu ancak söz varlığı öğelerinin geniş hacmi karşısında belli bir kısmının öncelikli olarak öğretilmesi gerektiği görüşüdür. Mevcut ders kitapları taranarak titizlikle ve şeffaflık ilkesi doğrultusunda hazırlanan bu çalışmada sözcük ortografik bir birim olarak ele alınmıştır. Çalışma üç aşamalı olarak gerçekleştirilmiş olup A1 düzeyinde 1152 ve A2 düzeyinde 1653 sözcüğe ulaşılmıştır. Hazırlanan listede söz varlığı öğeleri "sözcükler" ve "sözcük sınırlarını aşan birimler" olarak temelde iki gruba ayrılmıştır. Sözcük sınırlarını aşan birimler de "biçim birimsel birimler, sözcüksel birimler, söz dizimsel birimler ve söylem birimleri" olarak dört başlıkta gruplandırılmıştır. Yaygınlık kriterine göre belirlenen sözcükler DAOÖÇ ile uyumlu hâle getirilmiştir. Tüm birimler, yazarın kendisi tarafından üretilen cümlelerle örneklenmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Yabancılarla Türkçe öğretimi, kitap tanıtımı, söz varlığı.

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Teaching Turkish as a foreign/ second language is a field that has recorded rapid improvement in recent years. The considerable demand for learning Turkish has enabled the studies to develop systemically and become more qualified in this field. Despite all the developments, one of the main points lacking in this field is that the word/ vocabulary list prepared based on language levels is inadequate. Çalışkan's study entitled *A Vocabulary Proposal Aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages towards Turkish A1 and A2 Levels* provides a basis for this subject as well as being the source of further studies. The list that has been generated is of greater importance rather than a word list, yet in terms of a vocabulary list.

The *Introduction* part of the study is organized into two headings: Word Lists intended from Foreign Languages and Turkish Word Lists. In the *Method* part, however, the study is explained in detail under the headings of Creating the List, Evaluating the List, Aligning the Vocabulary with CEFR and Reaching the Units that Exceed the Limits of the Word based on the Final List; in addition, the process was elaborated. The *Findings and Interpretation* part covers the headings of the Inclusion Process, the Elimination Process and Notes on Certain Words (Adjectives, Verbs, Adverbs, Function Words). Following the *Result and Discussion* part, at the initial part of the *Sample List* is a short description written by the author for users both in Turkish and English. This section is an instruction manual on the nature of the list and how to benefit from it. In addition to Turkish, English explanation also addresses the target audience of the study. The Appendix section, which follows Sample List, contains numeric data about the units touched upon and the explanations of the preferences of inclusion and elimination throughout the study. This section, as emphasized by the author several times, is noteworthy in demonstrating the transparency of the inclusion and elimination processes performed in accordance with subjective criteria at certain points.

This study has been built on the idea that vocabulary is important in the acquisition of language skills, yet that a certain part of it should be taught as a priority in the face of the broad volume of the elements of vocabulary. However, previous studies indicated a positive correlation between vocabulary and language skills. The language learner develops basic comprehension and expression skills through vocabulary in the first place. Nevertheless, contrary to grammar that consists of a certain number of rules, it is unlikely to limit the vocabulary. This raises the question of how to identify vocabulary elements that are a priority for a language learner and increases the importance of word lists to be prepared accordingly. Çalışkan highlights the need to teach words based on a specific system. In this regard, she presents a vocabulary proposal aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages towards Turkish A1 and A2 levels. In the study, the word was regarded as an orthographic unit whereas such expressions that exceed the limits of word were also included. Çalışkan predicated the generation vocabulary on the prevalence criteria. The fact that she made inclusion and elimination in the word lists obtained from textbooks and gravitated towards the units that exceed the limits of word based on orthographic units made the study more comprehensive, taking it beyond a word list and making it a vocabulary.

Çalışkan carried out this study in three phases. In the first phase, A1 and A2 level textbooks (Gazi, İstanbul, Yedi İklim ve Yeni Hitit) used in the teaching of

Turkish as a foreign/ second language were scanned and transferred into digital environment. Through the data obtained, the Turkish Textbooks Corpus was generated. Correspondingly, at the A1 level, 57.674 input words and 10.328 different words; at the A2 level, 69.670 input words and 15.288 different words were identified. In the second phase, 4765 orthographic words were obtained by dissociating the words in the corpus. In the final phase of the study, however, the word list was aligned with CEFR and a draft consisting of 2027 words was formed. As a result of certain inclusions and eliminations made to the list, 1152 words at the A1 level and 1653 words at the A2 level were finally achieved. The author states that the inclusion and elimination process constitutes the subjective aspect of the study. On the contrary, the weaknesses that may result from the subjectivity were attempted to be eliminated by listing the criteria that are the basis of evaluation.

In her list, Çalışkan basically classified vocabulary elements under two categories “words” and “units that exceed the limits of word.” Under the “word” heading, word was considered as an orthographic unit; however, “the units that exceed the limits of word” was further subdivided into four categories: “morpheme units,” “lexical units,” “syntactic units,” and “discourse units.” The vocabulary elements may be exemplified as follows: Words: tavşan (rabbit), kalem (pencil), anne (mother) etc. (words written separately from the words that come before and after itself); Morpheme Units: arkadaki (in the back), birbirimiz (each other), hepimiz (all of us) etc. (units that are formed as a result of the combination of independent and dependent morphemes); Lexical Units: sabaha karşı (towards the morning), yavaş yavaş (slowly), ağrı kesici (painkillers) etc. (compound words, reduplications, embedded collocations); Syntactic Units: X<sup>noun</sup> + A zararlı (harmful) (sağlığa zararlı) (harmful for the health), X<sup>adjective</sup> + gözlü (eyes) kahverengi gözlü (brown eyes), X<sup>günü</sup> (day) Pazartesi günü (on Monday) etc. (productive units in which words appear within certain grammatical structures); Discourse Units: iyi ki (fortunately), bunun için (therefore), görüşürüz (see you) etc. (expressions that ensure the coherency and consistency of the text, that reveal the attitude of speaking and govern mutual communication). It is also worth noting that presenting the syntactic units included in the units that exceed the limits of word to students by formulating provides an effective framework for the students.

To ensure that words and additional are noticed throughout the list, the additional has been shown by hyphens as in the examples “Ders- ten sonra park- ta tenis oyna- dı-k. (We played tennis after the lesson). Doktor randevu<s>u var (S/he has an appointment at the doctor’s).” In case of an elision or phoneme evaluation, the relevant sound has been underlined, as seen in the example “Doğru seçeneğ-i işaretle<y>in (Mark the correct option).” The author formed sample sentences following its context in the corpus instead of being selected from the corpus generated for the study. This is due to the likelihood that the relevant word was not used in coherence based on the dictionary item as well as the possibility that other words in the context were not included in the list. Thus, all sentences presented for the A1 level were intended to be generated through the words at the A1 level.

One of the purposes of the study is to eliminate uncertainties resulting from homophony, homogram, and parts of speech. To this end, parts of speech were classified and listed; the words having multiple meanings were presented together with sample sentences in order to reveal their meanings at relevant language levels. In

addition to words, morpheme and lexical units were also identified. The first column shows examples of homophones as (I) and (II). Here, it is worth noting that certain words that are not labeled as homophones in the Turkish Dictionary are listed in Çalışkan's list as (I) and (II) in line with the representation of homophones. For instance, the word "sıra" (queue) used in such sentences as "Sıraya girin" (Get in the queue) or "Kitaplar sıranın üzerinde" (The books are on the desk) is given as an example for these words. In our opinion, the main point here is that the words have lost their transparency so that their interlexical sense relations are lost for those who learn Turkish as a foreign/ second language. This situation, however, triggers the debates on whether there should be a difference between dictionaries to be prepared for foreigners and for general purposes in terms of the item presentation.

Certain criteria that the author puts emphasis on while developing the list are remarkable. First of all, the CEFR text was taken as guidance. The vocabulary that was formed was aligned with the CEFR. In this process, the author determined key expressions related to the vocabulary in the statements of acquisition at A1 and A2 levels and evaluated each word in terms of their compatibility with the framework suggested by these key expressions. The second criterion is transparency. The list was made as transparent as possible, allowing the word to be included or eliminated when necessary. The author, who attaches importance to transparency, included the inclusions and eliminations made during the research process in the *Appendix* section at the end of the book. This may enable researchers to use the current list by forming it based on their purposes. When preparing the list in the study, in addition to focusing upon frequently and widely used words, it is ensured that the words were in compliance. This may contribute to language learners producing text. The third criterion of the author is up-to-dateness. In the finalization of the word list, the selection of words that students can use in their daily lives was considered.

While preparing the list, Çalışkan examined the national and international literature and evaluated relevant studies. The most important part of Çalışkan's list that distinguishes it from other lists is that the criterion of prevalence was based on rather than frequency. The second crucial point is that the list was aligned with CEFR. At this point, the keyword elimination method may guide the subsequent adaptation efforts. Finally, the fact that a series of subjective criteria were included in the study and, in this regard, additions were made from other lists also increases the content validity of the list.

The current study may also guide the further studies to be conducted in terms of the determination of units that exceed the limits of word. Moreover, it may allow students to control their learning by themselves in addition to Turkish as foreign/second language teachers. When preparing the word list, the relationships between the words and grammatical structures were also intended to be revealed. The association between the meaning of a word and grammar was especially emphasized. In this regard, the current study also guides teachers and those who develop teaching materials. Based on the above-mentioned properties, this vocabulary proposal which was distinguished from previous studies and prepared by carrying out comprehensive and rigorous studies to address the need in the relevant field is thought to establish a precedent for field researchers and be a new starting point.

Çalışkan conducted the present study on the basis of the most-used textbooks in teaching Turkish to foreigners. Nevertheless, the number of textbooks used in this field is rapidly increasing. In case the current study is updated or new vocabulary lists are prepared for B1, B2, and C1 language levels, using all current teaching sets may increase the content validity and a clearer view of the field is presented. As emphasized in the title of the study by the author, it is intended for a “proposal” rather than offering a peremptory vocabulary list. Moreover, evaluating all existing textbooks may reinforce this proposal.

### Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

### Author Bio

She was born in 1978 in Karabük. She completed her primary and secondary education in Çankırı/Çerkeş. She graduated from Gazi University, Faculty of Literature and Sciences, Department of Turkish Language and Literature in 1998; She received her master's degree from Gazi University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Turkish Language in 2001; She completed her doctorate in Gazi University, Institute of Educational Sciences, Department of Turkish Language and Literature Education with her thesis titled "The Place of Institutions Training Turkish/Literature Teachers in Turkish Education History (1923-1950)" in 2012. She worked as a lecturer in Kastamonu University Education Faculty Turkish Language Teaching Department between 1999-2012 and as an assistant professor between 2012-2015. Between 2015-2019, she was appointed by the Ministry of National Education as a Turkish lecturer at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter in England. Her study subjects include Teaching Turkish, Teaching Turkish to Foreigners, Teaching Grammar, Children's Literature, Reading Education, and there are national and international articles, papers and book chapters on these subjects. She is still working as an assistant professor in Kastamonu University Faculty of Education, Department of Turkish Language Teaching.

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