

**THE REPRESENTATION OF THE ABILITY VERB IN
TEACHING TURKISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A FORM-
MEANING-USE BASED PEDAGOGICAL PROPOSAL ***

**TÜRKÇENİN YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRETİMİNDE
YETERLİLİK FİİLİNİN TEMSİLİ: BİÇİM-ANLAM-KULLANIM
TEMELLİ PEDAGOJİK BİR ÖNERİ**

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Özet

Bu çalışma, Türkçenin yabancı dil olarak öğretiminde kullanılan ders kitaplarında yeterlilik fiilinin (–Abil) sunumunu incelemekte ve "biçim–anlam–kullanım" (form–meaning–use) modeline dayalı pedagojik bir öneri sunmaktadır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden doküman analizi kullanılmıştır. Bu kapsamda; Gazi Üniversitesi Yabancılar İçin Türkçe A2, Yeni Hitit Yabancılar İçin Türkçe A1–A2, Yeni İstanbul Uluslararası Öğrenciler İçin Türkçe A2 ve Yedi İklim Türkçe Öğretim Seti A2 ders kitapları incelenmiştir. Bulgular, yeterlilik fiilinin tüm kitaplarda A2 düzeyinde sunulduğunu; ancak biçimsel açıklamalar, bağlamsal örnekler ve işlevsel anlam çeşitliliği (olasılık, izin,

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rica vb.) bakımından sunumun yetersiz olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca yeterlilik ekinin kullanım sıklığının gelecek zaman (-AcAk) ve gereklilik (-mAll) eklerine kıyasla daha yüksek olduğu belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak yeterlilik fiilinin sadece biçimsel değil, anlamsal ve işlevsel boyutlarını da kapsayan iletişimsel bir öğretim tasarımı önerilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Türkçenin yabancı dil olarak öğretimi, yeterlilik fiili, biçim-anlam-kullanım, ders kitabı analizi, iletişimsel dilbilgisi.*

Abstract

This study examines the representation of the ability verb (-Abil) in textbooks used in teaching Turkish as a foreign language (TFL) and provides a pedagogical proposal based on the "form-meaning-use" model. Document analysis, a qualitative research method, was employed in the study. In this context, the following textbooks were analyzed: Gazi University Turkish for Foreigners A2, Yeni Hitit Turkish for Foreigners A1-A2, Yeni İstanbul Turkish for International Students A2, and Yedi İklim Turkish Teaching Set A2. The findings revealed that while the ability verb is included at the A2 level in all textbooks, its presentation is insufficient in terms of formal explanations, contextual examples, and functional semantic diversity (possibility, permission, request, etc.). Furthermore, it was determined that the frequency of use of the ability suffix is higher compared to the future tense (-AcAk) and necessity (-mAll) suffixes. Consequently, a communicative instructional design that encompasses not only the formal but also the semantic and functional dimensions of the ability verb is proposed.

Keywords: *Teaching Turkish as a foreign language, ability verb, form-meaning-use, textbook analysis, communicative grammar.*

Introduction

In today's globalized world, increasing interaction with different cultures and countries through war, migration, travel, trade, and education has made foreign language learning and teaching a necessity. Knowing a foreign language provides individuals with social and economic advantages and various opportunities. To know a foreign language means to understand and express oneself in the target language. Foreign language teaching is built upon four fundamental skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Grammar is not a basic skill, yet learners must use the rules of the language correctly in all four skills; otherwise, it cannot be said that the learner truly knows the language.

There are many definitions of grammar. Some of them are as follows: Grammar is the science that examines the sound, form, and sentence structure of a language and identifies the rules that govern its operation (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2025). It is also defined as the field that enables the transfer of thought into speech and text, systematically teaching the rules and methods that ensure the correct understanding and use of language (Korkmaz, 2014). The term grammar, derived from the Latin *gramma* (“letter, sign”) and *grammatica* (“the art of writing and reading letters”), was initially perceived as the art of literacy, but today it is accepted as a field that examines the sound, form, sentence, and text structure of a language together with its functional and semantic aspects. Grammar includes several subfields: phonetics, morphology, syntax and semantics. It is the integration of these subfields and their relationships with one another (Güneş, 2013). In general terms, grammar has been described as “knowledge about where words can be used and what form they should take” (Harmer, 2015, p. 22). Therefore, grammar can be defined as a field that studies and teaches the sounds, words, and sentences of a language both individually and within the integrity of sentences and texts, analyzing them in terms of meaning, function, structure, rules, and system.

The teaching of grammar in foreign languages is a controversial topic (Wang, 2010; Hezretkuliyeve & Aydogdyeva, 2024). Wang (2010) and Katz & Watzinger-Tharp (2009) indicate that some language teachers consider grammar instruction unnecessary and claim that it does not contribute to communicative competence, while others believe that it is essential. In their study, Katz & Watzinger-Tharp (2009) also report that some teachers feel compelled to explain grammar to learners because the explanations in textbooks are not well understood, and they wish to make grammar explanations and activities more communicative. Ly (2020) stresses that when grammar is taught at the right time, in an appropriate context, and with effective methods, it helps learners structure their language learning processes more efficiently. Grammar teaching should be integrated with other language skills, and instead of meaningless, context-free sentences, it should be presented in meaningful and purposeful contexts. This approach allows learners to use grammar rules and structures more confidently and functionally in daily life.

To standardize foreign language education, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe) was prepared by the Council of Europe. Today, modern foreign language teaching is carried out with reference to this framework. According to the Council of

Europe (2021), the goal is not to discard grammar teaching entirely (p. 33); instead, there is a clear focus on aligning grammatical precision with the learner's specific proficiency stage (p. 136). Essentially, mastering grammar remains a fundamental pillar for the overall advancement of linguistic competence. In the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2021), grammatical accuracy is presented from levels A1 to C2 as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. *Grammatical Accuracy According to Proficiency Levels*

Level	Grammatical Accuracy
A1	Can use some basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns, but such use is very limited.
A2	Shows basic accuracy in the use of grammar; despite systematic errors, the intended meaning is generally clear.
B1	Has generally good control of grammar. The influence of the mother tongue is noticeable. Errors do not hinder communication. Can use language patterns related to familiar contexts with sufficient accuracy most of the time.
B2	Has a good command of grammar. Occasional minor errors occur. Demonstrates high control over simple and some complex structures.
C1	Generally uses grammatical structures accurately; errors are very rare and usually go unnoticed.
C2	Continues to use complex grammatical structures consistently and accurately even when attention is directed elsewhere.

The Place of the Ability Verb in Turkish Grammar

The *ability verb* (yeterlilik fiili) in Turkish is formed by adding the -(y)A adverbial suffix (*zarf-fiil*) to a verb stem, followed by the auxiliary verb bil- (to know / to be able):

bekleye- (wait) → bekleyebil- (can wait)

yap- (do) → yapabil- (can do)

çal- (play) → çalabil- (can play)

gel- (come) → gelebil- (can come)

söyleme- (not say) → söylemeyebil- (may not say)

isteme- (not want) → istemeyebil- (may not want) (Korkmaz, 2014, p. 200)

The *ability verb* carries a wide range of semantic and communicative functions, and it holds an important place in daily communication. It is one of the most frequently used structures in Turkish.

In a corpus-based study by Aksan, Aksan, Mersinli, and Demirhan (2017), titled *A Frequency Dictionary of Turkish (Türkçe Ulusal Derlemi - TNC)*, the frequency of tense, mood, and aspect suffixes in Turkish was analyzed using the verb *git-* (go) as an example. The data show that the ability suffix (-Abil), with 532,353 occurrences, is used far more frequently than the future tense (-AcAk), progressive (-mAktA), and necessity (-mAll) suffixes (p. 199). This indicates the *central role* of the ability suffix in Turkish communication and highlights the necessity of prioritizing its instruction in teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

Figure 1 below demonstrates the comparative frequency of tense, mood, and aspect suffixes in Turkish:

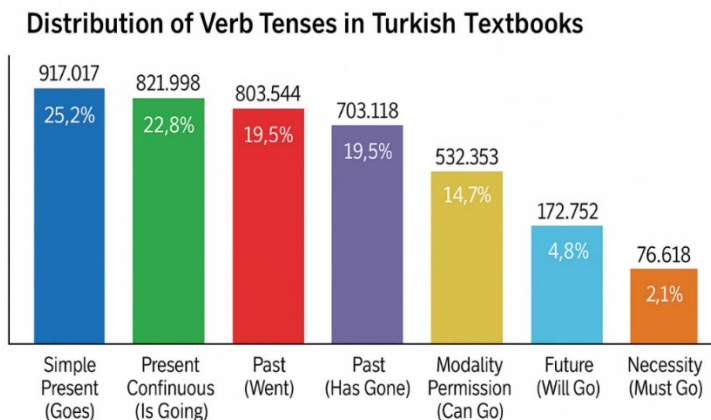


Figure 1. *Frequency of Tense, Mood, and Aspect Suffixes in Turkish (Aksan et al., 2017, p. 199)*

The chart clearly shows that the ability suffix has a considerably higher frequency compared to other suffixes. This finding underscores that the *ability verb* is a crucial grammatical structure that should receive particular attention in instruction.

Form–Meaning–Use (FMU) Framework in Grammar Teaching

Various approaches and methods have been proposed for presenting grammatical structures. Among these, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) provide a conceptual framework for teaching grammar structures, represented in the form of a pie chart in figure 2.

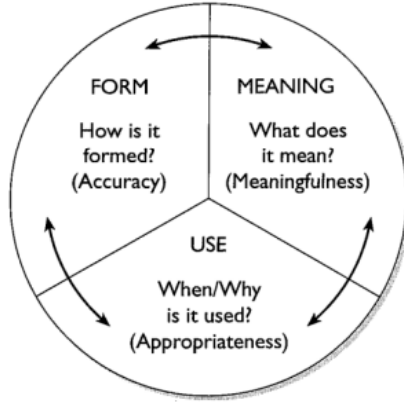


Figure 2. *Conceptual Framework for the Presentation of Grammatical Structures (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p. 4)*

Each slice of the chart represents one of the three interrelated dimensions of grammar: form, meaning, and use.

While the form dimension examines the structural composition of a specific grammatical unit, the meaning aspect clarifies its semantic value and the particular nuance it contributes to the overall sentence. The use dimension examines when, why, and in what context the structure is used.

The use dimension also deals with how language users make grammatical choices appropriate to the context and whether they select the correct structure for a given communicative situation.

The model emphasizes that learners must acquire grammatical structures that are accurate (form), meaningful (meaning), and appropriate (use). Each part of the model is represented as equal in size, and the two-way arrows between them signify that form, meaning, and use are equally important and interact dynamically, therefore cannot be taught in isolation. This approach underlines that it is not sufficient to have learners simply memorize rules; they must also be guided to use grammatical structures in meaningful and contextually appropriate ways.

Theoretical Framework

Grammar Teaching and the Communicative Approach

Grammar is defined as a science that examines the sound, form, and sentence structure of a language and identifies the rules governing its operation (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2025). However, today grammar is accepted not merely as the art of reading and writing letters, but as a field that examines the sound, form, sentence, and text structure of a language together with its functional and semantic aspects. Ur (2012) defines grammar as the way words are arranged to create well-formed sentences, while Harmer (2015) describes it as the understanding of how words are used in context and the forms they need to take.

Although the teaching of grammar in foreign languages is a controversial topic, it is known that learning a foreign language without grammar instruction is difficult and time-consuming. Wang (2010) emphasizes that grammar instruction forms the foundation of foreign language teaching. However, grammar instruction should not be based on meaningless, context-free sentences; instead, it should be presented in meaningful and purposeful contexts. Ellis (2020) and Borg & Burns (2022) argue that effective grammar pedagogy requires learners not only to understand linguistic forms but also to recognize their pragmatic functions in authentic discourse. Nassaji and Fotos (2019) state that grammar teaching should employ a balance of form-focused and meaning-focused instruction. This approach allows learners to use grammar rules and structures more confidently and functionally in daily life.

FMU Model

The FMU model, developed by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) for the presentation of grammatical structures, provides a holistic framework in language teaching. This model consists of three interrelated dimensions represented as a pie chart:

- **Form:** Focuses on how a particular grammatical structure is constructed (accuracy).
- **Meaning:** Explains what that structure means semantically and what kind of meaning it adds to the sentence (meaningfulness).
- **Use:** Examines when, why, and in what context the structure is used (appropriateness).

The core principle of the model is that these three dimensions are of equal importance and interact dynamically; therefore, they cannot be taught in isolation. It is not sufficient for learners simply to memorize rules; they must also be guided to use grammatical structures in meaningful and contextually appropriate ways. The ability verb (-Abil), which is the subject of this study, offers an ideal ground for applying this model due to its rich functional nature (e.g., permission, request, prediction, ability).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe) and Grammatical Accuracy

The "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (Council of Europe), prepared by the Council of Europe to standardize foreign language education, serves as a primary reference for modern language teaching. The Council of Europe (2021) does not suggest abandoning grammar instruction but rather emphasizes the importance of grammatical accuracy according to proficiency levels.

According to the Council of Europe (2021):

- **Levels A1 and A2** are characterized by the use of limited and basic structures. At the A2 level, although systematic errors occur, the intended meaning is generally clear.
- **Levels B1 and B2** demonstrate better control over grammar and a command of more complex structures.
- **Levels C1 and C2** aim for a high degree of accuracy where errors are very rare.

This framework indicates that grammar instruction is accepted as an essential element for learners to develop their communicative competence.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

In the literature, no studies have been found that directly and/or systematically examine the presentation of the ability verb (Yeterlik fiili) in textbooks used for teaching Turkish as a foreign language. The purpose of this study is to determine at which level and in what manner this verb — which is frequently used in daily language and carries multiple functions — is presented in textbooks, and, based on the findings, to offer a teaching proposal in accordance with the form–meaning–use (FMU) model of *Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999)*.

Within the scope of this aim, the following course books were analyzed:

- *Gazi Üniversitesi Yabancılar İçin Türkçe Ders Kitabı A2* (2013) — *Gazi University Turkish for Foreigners Course Book A2*
- *Yeni Hitit Yabancılar için Türkçe Ders Kitabı A1–A2* (2008) — *Yeni Hitit Turkish for Foreigners Course Book A1–A2*
- *Yeni İstanbul Uluslararası Öğrenciler için Türkçe Ders Kitabı A2* (2020) — *Yeni İstanbul Turkish for International Students Course Book A2*
- *Yedi İklim Yunus Emre Enstitüsü Türkçe Öğretim Seti Ders Kitabı A2* (2015) — *Yedi İklim Yunus Emre Institute Turkish Teaching Set Course Book A2*

Research Questions

This study seeks to evaluate the presentation of the ability verb (-Abil) in Turkish as a Foreign Language (TFL) textbooks within the framework of the "Form–Meaning–Use" model. In line with this objective, the following research questions have been addressed:

Regarding Form: How is the morphological structure of the ability verb (-Abil) and its variations (negative forms, tense combinations) presented across the selected A2 level TFL textbooks?

Regarding Meaning: To what extent do the textbooks cover the diverse semantic functions (ability, permission, possibility, request) of the suffix -Abil?

Regarding Use: Are the grammatical structures supported by authentic contexts and pragmatic examples that demonstrate the situational use of the ability verb?

Comparative Analysis: Are there significant differences among the examined textbooks (Gazi, Yeni Hitit, Yeni İstanbul, Yedi İklim) in terms of their adherence to the FMU dimensions?

Pedagogical Implications: Based on the findings, how can a more integrated and communicative teaching model be proposed for the instruction of ability verbs?

Method

This study employs the document analysis method, one of the qualitative research designs. In qualitative research, not only existing information but also the researcher's personal perspective and interpretation contribute to the process of data analysis and interpretation

(Şimşek, 2018, pp. 96–97). Document analysis involves the examination of written materials related to the research topic.

In the field of educational sciences, documents such as course books, curricula, student records, meeting notes and teacher and student guides are considered valid data sources (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In this method, data obtained from sources selected in line with the research purpose are systematically analyzed to reach meaningful conclusions (Çepni, 2007). In this study, the presentation of the ability verb (yeterlilik fiili) in textbooks used for teaching Turkish as a foreign language was investigated. The research was limited to course books (ders kitapları) because the focus was on the instructional content of the topic. Therefore, workbooks (çalışma kitapları), which are practice-oriented, were excluded from the scope.

This research was designed using the document analysis method, a qualitative research design. Grammar presentations in the primary textbooks used for teaching Turkish as a foreign language were systematically examined using qualitative data analysis techniques.

Data Analysis Process and Flowchart

The data analysis was conducted in four distinct stages, synthesizing content analysis and descriptive analysis techniques:

Selection of Documents: The A2 level books of four core Turkish teaching sets were included in the scope of the study.

Identification of Data Units: All grammar boxes, reading texts, and exercises related to the ability verb (-Abil) in the textbooks were selected as units of analysis.

Coding and Categorization: The identified data were coded based on Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman's (1999) FMU model. To ensure a systematic analysis, a multi-stage coding process was employed. Initially, the textbooks were scanned for all instances of the ability verb (-Abil), which were then categorized based on their structural properties (Form), semantic nuances (Meaning), and contextual functions (Use). This inductive coding approach allowed for a comprehensive mapping of how the target structure is presented across different curriculum sets.

Comparative Analysis: The findings were synthesized through a matching matrix to reveal the differences between the textbooks.

Coding Protocol and Matrix

To ensure systematicity and objectivity during the document analysis, a structured coding scheme was developed based on the Form–Meaning–Use framework. The specific categories, codes, and operational definitions utilized in this Coding Protocol and Matrix are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. *The thematic coding protocol used during the analysis process*

Main Category	Sub-Categories (Codes)	Analysis Criteria
Form	Morphological structure, Negation, Tense markers	Formal presentation of the structure and variations of suffixes.
Meaning	Ability, Permission, Request, Prediction, Advice	Semantic functions and meanings added to the sentence.
Use	Context, Social setting, Pragmatic appropriateness	How the structure is presented in real-life communication situations.

Comparative Matching Matrix and Thematic Sampling

The matching matrix logic used to determine the scope of the content provided by the books is as follows:

Coding Example: For instance, while examining unit 6B in the "Yeni İstanbul A2" textbook, the "Requesting permission" function was coded under the "Meaning" category, whereas the absence of the "Prohibiting" function was noted as a "Use" gap.

Thematic Category Example: For the "Prediction/Possibility" category, the presence of examples like "Hava bulutlu, yağmur yağabilir" (It is cloudy, it may rain) was checked, and whether the "noun + olabilir" pattern was presented was analyzed comparatively.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the scientific rigour and objectivity of the study, several strategies were employed to establish both validity and multidimensional reliability. The structural and content validity of the "Form–Meaning–Use" (FMU) analytical matrix was confirmed through expert opinions, while the validity of the data was further enhanced by supporting each finding with direct screenshots from the textbooks and in-text quotations.

The course books were analyzed specifically in terms of the teaching of the ability verb (-Abil), and their presentations were compared; the way this grammatical structure was explained in each book was identified, and any deficiencies in presentation were noted. Regarding reliability, the coding performed by the primary researcher was repeated at different time intervals to ensure "intra-coder reliability." Furthermore, to eliminate researcher bias and meet high-impact methodological standards, an inter-coder reliability check was conducted with the participation of an external independent expert specialized in Turkish Language Teaching (TFL). While the primary researcher completed the initial analysis, this independent expert re-coded a randomly selected 25% of the dataset. The consistency between the two coders was calculated using the formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994): $Reliability = \frac{[Number\ of\ Agreements]}{[Total\ Number\ of\ Agreements + Disagreements]} \times 100$. The calculation yielded an inter-coder agreement rate of 94%, significantly exceeding the 80% threshold accepted for high reliability in qualitative document analysis. Based on these validated findings, a teaching proposal aligned with Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman's Form-Meaning-Use model was developed to improve the teaching of the ability verb. The reliability of the study was further supported by a clear audit trail of the document analysis process; every step, from the initial selection of the four textbook sets to the final comparative matrix, was documented to allow for reproducibility. By cross-referencing the findings with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Council of Europe (2021) standards and resolving minor discrepancies through professional deliberation between the researcher and the expert, the study provided an objective and verified assessment of the grammatical representations.

Results

In this study, four A2-level textbooks in which the *ability verb* (yeterlilik fiili) is taught were examined. The findings regarding how the topic is handled and the identified deficiencies are presented below. In the *Yeni Hitit Turkish for Foreigners A1-A2 Course Book*, the topic of *ability* appears in Unit 9. Apart from the chart provided, there is no explanatory text related to the topic. Its formal properties and sample verbs are presented in a table, followed by exercises. As shown in Figure 3, there is no explanation of what meanings the ability verb adds to sentences or how it is used in context.

YETERLİK						-iyEbil- / -iyEmE-
Eylem	—	Ek	Zaman Eki	Kişi Eki	Örnekler	
Al	-a/-ya	mı	-abil / -yabil	-ılıyor	-iyim / -im	<i>alabiliyorum / alabilirdim / alabileceğim / alabilirim ...</i>
çık	-e/-ye	mi	-ebil / -yebil	-Di	-sın / -n	<i>çıkamam / çıkamayabilirim / çıkamayabilirim ...</i>
gel		mu		-lyAcAk	—	<i>gelemiyor / gelemedi / gelemeyecek / gelmemiş ...</i>
git		mü		-mİş	-lyiz / -k	<i>gidebiliyor / gidemedi / gidemeyecek / gidemez ...</i>
konuş		ma		-r / -ir / -Ar	-sınız / -ntiz	<i>konuşabiliyor / konuşamıyor / konuşamayabilir ...</i>
koş		me			-IAr	<i>koşamıyor / koşamadı / koşamayacak / koşamaz ...</i>
gör		maz				<i>göremem / görmeyebilirim / görmeyebilirim ...</i>
anla		mez				<i>anlayabiliyor / anlayabiliyordum / anlayabiliyorum ...</i>

12 Tamamlayalım

- Bak babal Bak! Bisiklet sür ebiliyorum _____.
- Sesim çok kötüdür, asla şarkı söyle _____.
- Bugün şirkete müfettişler gel _____.
Hazırlıklı olalım.
- Beyefendi lütfen cep telefonunuzu kapatın. Bu otobüste telefon kullan _____.
- Bu sabah otobüse yetiş _____ ve sınava geç kaldım.
- Maalesef yarınki pikniğe biz git _____.
- Pardon, bu sandalye boş mu? Otur _____ ?
- Büyük ihtimalle yazın iş yerinde yeni bir projeye başlayacağız. Bu yüzden, bu yıl tatile çık _____.

Figure 3. *The Ability Verb Topic (Yeni Hitit Turkish for Foreigners A1–A2, 2008, p. 108)*

In the *Yeni İstanbul Turkish for International Students A2 Course Book*, the *ability* topic appears in Unit 6 (final unit). As shown in Figure 4, the 6A section presents the formal properties of the ability verb. It is stated that the structure conveys physical and mental ability, and its negative form is also presented. It is mentioned that its present tense form can convey the meaning of assumption/prediction, and exercises follow these explanations. In Section 6B, explanations for the meanings of permission (izin), request (rica), advice (tavsiye), possibility (ihtimal), and prediction (tahmin) are provided, with related exercises. However, the “prohibition (yasak)” meaning is not included in the explanations, though it is used in the exercises (p.103). No morphological explanation is provided for this use; learners are expected to deduce the form from examples. In the “Bir Adım Ötesi (One Step Further)” section (p.112), the negative form of the present tense is explained to express possibility/assumption and potential obstacle. In conclusion, the book’s grammatical explanations do not cover the meanings of *prohibition*, *noun + olabilir (may be) constructions*, *present tense prediction*, or *past tense assumption*.

DİL BİLGİSİ

Yeterlilik Fiili

Fiziksel ve zihinsel yeterliliği anlatmak için kullanılır.

"Yeterlilik Fiili" is used for describing physical or mental ability as well as the lack of them. "Can", "could" and "to be able to" can be regarded as the English equivalents of "Yeterlilik Fiili" in Turkish.

Olumlu

fiil + (y)Abil + zaman ekleri + kişi eki

Örnek: Ben bu problemi çözebilirim.

4 Aşağıdaki cümleleri örnekteki gibi tamamlayalım.

1. Çok hızlı koş.....
2. Günde 100 sayfa oku.....
3. Önümüzdeki yıl çok güzel Türkçe konuş.....
4. Sonunda maaşı yüksek bir iş bul.....

Olumsuz-İ

Yeterlilik fiilinin bu olumsuz biçiminde kişinin bir fiili yapmaya gücü yetmemesi, başaramaması söz konusudur.

The negative form of "Yeterlilik Fiili" "refers to the incapability of doing something or the lack of skills or sources necessary for doing something.

fiil + (y)A + olumsuzluk eki + zaman ekleri + kişi eki

Örnek: O piyano çalamaz.

5 Aşağıdaki cümleleri örnekteki gibi tamamlayalım.

1. Ayşe çok çalıştı ama sınavı geç.....
2. Ben bisiklete bin.....
3. Geç saatte dışarı çık....., çünkü annem izin vermez.
4. Topluluk önünde konuş.....

Olumsuz-İİ

Yeterlilik fiilinin bu olumsuz biçiminde tahmin söz konusudur.

When used in this negative form, "Yeterlilik Fiili" can also refer to a prediction or an assumption that something is unlikely to happen.

fiil + mA + (y)Abil + geniş zaman + kişi eki

Örnek: Zehra yarın okula gelmeyebilir.

6 Aşağıdaki cümleleri örnekteki gibi tamamlayalım.

1. Akşamki toplantıya katıl..... Beni beklemeyin.
2. Ali az önce tost yedi, şimdi yemek ye.....
3. Ayşe sana çok kızgın, seni affet.....
4. Hava çok sisli. Uçak zamanında kalk.....

Figure 4. The Ability Verb Topic (Yeni İstanbul Turkish for International Students A2, 2020, p.100)

In the *Yedi İklim Yunus Emre Institute Turkish Teaching Set A2 Course Book*, the *ability* topic appears in Unit 6. On page 116, the topic begins with a reading text containing *ability verbs*. Next to the text, the formal feature of the *ability verb* is given in figure 5.

a, ı, o, u → –abil–e, i, ö, ü → –ebil–

Apart from this morphological note, no further explanation is provided. On the following pages (pp.117–118), as shown in Figure 6 and Figure 7, there is no detailed grammatical explanation; only example sentences supported with visuals are given. As shown in Figure 8, there is a ten-question exercise related to the functions of the ability verb. However, no examples for the advice (tavsiye) or prohibition (yasak) meanings are found. There is also no explanation about which tenses can follow the ability verb or its use for predictions noun + olabilir, present, past tense.



5. Okuyalım.
Kuzen

Begüm Acele edelim, saat birdeki otobüse yetişebiliriz.

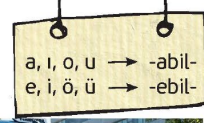


Figure 5. Formal Property of the Ability Verb (*Yedi İklim Yunus Emre Institute Turkish Teaching Set A2, 2015, p.116*)



7. Okuyalım.



Ben gitar çalabilirim ama piyano çalamam.



O, bisiklete binemez ama otomobil kullanabilir.



Sen, basketbol oynayabilirsin ama tenis oynayamazsın.



Salata yapabilirsiniz ama yemek yapamazsınız.



Yarasalar gündüz uyuyabilirler ama gece uyuyamazlar.



Duvarı boyayabiliriz ama resim yapamayız.



Borç verebilirim ama borç isteyemem.



Bukalemun renk değiştirebilir ama uçamaz.



İnsan günlerce aç kalabilir ama susuz kalamaz.

Figure 6. Example Sentences with the Ability Verb (p.117)



9. İnceleyelim.

- Doğum gününe kesinlikle **gelemem**.
 - Bilmiyorum, henüz karar vermedim. Doğum gününe **gelmeyebilirim**.
 - Yarın için çok ödevim var. Doğum gününe **gelemeyebilirim**.
- Ali kesinlikle borç **veremez**.
 - Ali geçen ay benden 100 TL istedi ama benim yeterince param yoktu. Bu yüzden şimdi o da bana borç **veremeyebilirim**.
 - Ali ev kredisi ödüyor. Borç **veremeyebilir**.
- Bu yaz kesinlikle tatile **çıkamam**.
 - Araba almak için para biriktiriyorum. O yüzden bu yaz tatile **çıkamayabilirim**.
 - İşyerinde yeni bir proje üzerinde çalışıyoruz. Bu yaz tatile **çıkamayabilirim**.

yapamam
yapmayabilirim
yapamayabilirim

İhtimal



Biraz sonra yağmur yağabilir.



Dikkat iş makinesi çıkabilir.

İzin alma



Baba, ata binebilir miyim?



Öğretmenim, bir soru sorabilir miyim?

Yapabilme



Ben bu halteri kaldıramam.



Usain Bolt, yüz metreyi 9 saniyede koşabilir.

Rica etme



Pencereyi kapatabilir misiniz?



Bize yardım edebilir misiniz?

Figure 7. Example Sentences with the Ability Verb (p.118)



10. İşaretleyelim.

	İhtimal	Yapabilme	İzin alma	Rica etme
1. Affedersiniz, bir kahve alabilir miyim?				✓
2. Teyzem hiç güzel pilav pişiremez.				
3. Hiç ders çalışmıyor, sınıfta kalabilir.				
4. Öğretmenim, dışarıya çıkabilir miyim?				
5. Matematik problemlerini çok hızlı çözebilir.				
6. Yarın otelimize yeni bir turist grubu gelebilir.				
7. Çok üzgünüm, şimdi ağlayabilirim.				
8. Kartallar uçabilir ama tavuklar uçamaz.				
9. Pardon, biraz sessiz olabilir misiniz?				
10. Hafta içi sinemaya gidemezsin.				

Figure 8. Exercise on the Ability Verb (p.119)

In the *Gazi University Turkish for Foreigners A2 Course Book* (2013), the *ability verb* appears in Unit 4. No explicit explanation of the topic is provided. In this unit, the *ability verb* appears rarely within texts. For example, in an 18-sentence dialogue, two ability verbs occur (p.64):

“Otogara varınca bilgisayarımı bulamadım... hırsızı tespit edemedik (we couldn’t identify the thief).”

In a 13-sentence dialogue, four occurrences of the ability verb appear (p.67), and in a 30-sentence dialogue, there are four more examples (p.70). Near the end of Unit 4, six example sentences demonstrate different meanings of the ability verb, with labels such as possibility (olasılık), request (rica), ability (yeterlilik), permission (izin), inability (yetersizlik), and prohibition (yasak). A four-question test follows. However, the prediction (tahmin) and advice (tavsiye) meanings are absent, as are explanations of tense combinations and noun + olabilir (may be) constructions for assumptions.

Across all four textbooks analyzed, the ability verb (-Abil) topic appears at the A2 level, indicating consistency in level placement. However, presentations vary in terms of depth, content, and functionality.

According to the analysis results:

- In most books, the ability verb is presented only through example sentences and exercises, with no theoretical explanation.
- The Yeni İstanbul book provides more detailed explanations of form, meaning, and use than the others.
- In general, the semantic variety of the ability verb (e.g., ability, permission, request, prediction, prohibition, advice) is incomplete, with prohibition and prediction being rarely exemplified.
- Communicative activities that would enable learners to practice the structure in real-life contexts are limited.

Teaching Proposal for the “Ability Verb” Based on Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman’s Form–Meaning–Use Model

A comparative analysis across the analyzed datasets reveals a significant imbalance between the three dimensions of grammar instruction. While all four textbook sets (Gazi, Yeni Hitit, Yeni İstanbul, and Yedi İklim) provide extensive coverage of the 'form' dimension through structural drills and conjugation tables, they largely overlook the

nuanced 'meaning' and functional 'usage' of the ability verb (-Abil). Specifically, the textbooks tend to prioritize the 'possibility' and 'ability' meanings, while neglecting more pragmatic functions such as 'permission' or 'requesting' in social contexts. This descriptive-heavy approach suggests that current instructional materials focus more on grammatical accuracy than on communicative competence, failing to integrate the three-dimensional pedagogical model proposed by Larsen-Freeman.

Form (Biçim / Structure)

Positive Form (Olumlu Yapı)

fiil (verb) + -(y)abil / -(y)ebil + tense suffix + person suffix

(a, ı, o, u) / (e, i, ö, ü)

Irregular Verbs (Kural Dışı Fiiller):

ye- (eat) → *yi-yebilirim* (I can eat)

de- (say) → *di-yebilirim* (I can say)

tat- (taste) → *tad-abilirim* (I can taste)

git- (go) → *gid-ebilirim* (I can go)

et- (do/make) → *ed-ebilirim* (I can do / I can make)

Negative Form (Olumsuz Yapı)

fiil (verb) + -(y)A + -mA (negative suffix) + tense suffix + person suffix

fiil (verb) + -mA (negative suffix) -yAbil + simple present tense suffix + person suffix

fiil (verb) + -A + -mA (negative suffix) -yAbil + simple present tense suffix + person suffix

Examples:

git- (go) → *gidemem* (I cannot go) / *gidemedim* (I could not go / I wasn't able to go)

yaz- (write) → *yazmayabilirim* (I may not write / I might not write)

yaz- (write) → *yazamayabilirim* (I may not be able to write)

Positive Usage (Olumlu Kullanımı)

1. Meaning: Ability / Strength / Talent / Accomplishing a Difficult Task

(*Yeterlilik / gücü yetme / yetenek / zor bir işi başarmak*)

This meaning can occur in all tenses: present, progressive, future, definite past, and reported past.

Examples:

Resim çizebilirim (I can draw a picture).

Bilgisayar oyunu oynayabilirim (I can play computer games).

Gitar çalabilir mi? (Can he/she play the guitar?)

Türkçe film izleyebiliyorum (I am able to watch Turkish movies).

Elektrikler kesildi, beni görebiliyor musun? (The power is out, can you see me?)

Türkçe öğrendikten sonra üniversiteye başlayabileceğim (After learning Turkish, I will be able to start my education).

Bilet bulabildik, yarın konsere gidebileceğiz (We managed to find tickets; we will be able to go to the concert tomorrow).

Sonunda o evi alabildim (I finally managed to buy that house).

Annem söyledi, dört yaşında konuşabilmişim (My mom said I could speak when I was four).

Ali ile Ayşe evlenebilmiş mi? (Were Ali and Ayşe able to get married?)

2. Meaning: Asking or Giving Permission

(İzin isteme / izin verme)

Used tense: Simple present tense (*geniş zaman*). When asking for permission, sentences are formed with first person singular/plural; when giving or denying permission, second person singular/plural forms are used.

Kaleminizi kullanabilir miyiz? (May we use your pen?) Evet, kullanabilirsiniz (Yes, you may use it). Hayır, kullanamazsınız (No, you may not use it). Anneciğim, ödevlerimi bitirdim. Müzik dinleyebilir miyim? (Mom, I finished my homework. May I listen to music?) Evet, dinleyebilirsin (Yes, you may). Hayır, dinleyemezsin (No, you may not).

3. Meaning: Making a Request (*Rica etme*)

Used tense: Simple present tense (*geniş zaman*). Requests are made with second person singular/plural in interrogative form.

Kitapları kitaplığa koyabilir misin/iz? (Can you put the books on the shelf?) Evi temizleyebilir misin/iz? (Can you clean the house?) Pencereyi açabilir misin/iz? (Can you open the window?) Bana yardım edebilir misin/iz? (Can you help me?)

4. Meaning: Prediction / Possibility / Probability

(Tahmin / olasılık / ihtimal)

Used tense: Simple present tense (*geniş zaman*).

For nouns/adjectives → noun/adjective + olabilir (may be)

For current actions → verb + -(I)yor olabilir (may be doing)

For past events → verb + -miş olabilir (may have done)

Yarın sana gelebilirim (I may come to you tomorrow). Hava bulutlu, yağmur yağabilir (It's cloudy, it may rain). Kapı çalıyor, kapıdaki Ayşe olabilir (The one at the door may be Ayşe). Yerler ıslak olabilir (The floor might be wet). Kulaklıkla müzik dinliyor olabilir (He/she may be listening to music with headphones). Dışarı çıkmış olabilir (He/she may have gone out).

5. Meaning: Giving Advice (*Tavsiye*)

Used tense: Simple present tense (*geniş zaman*).

A: *Canım sıkılıyor, ne yapabilirim? (I'm bored, what can I do?)*

B: *Dışarı çıkabilirsin, yürüyüş yapabilirsin, kitap okuyabilirsin (You can go out, take a walk, or read a book).*

Negative Usage (Olumsuz Kullanımı)

1. Meaning: Inability / Lack of Strength or Capacity (*Yetersizlik / gücü yetmeme*)

Structure: fiil (verb) + -(y)A + -mA (negative suffix) + tense suffix + person suffix

This meaning can occur in all tenses: present, progressive, future, definite past, and reported past. In this usage, although the individual has the desire to perform an action, internal or external barriers prevent the behavior from occurring.

Ben futbol oyna-ya-ma-m (I cannot play football). — (Present tense: I want to, but there is an obstacle.)

Ben futbol oyna-ya-mı-yor-um (I am not able to play football). — (Present progressive: I want to now, but there is a barrier.)

Ben futbol oyna-ya-ma-yacağ-ım (I will not be able to play football). — (Future: There will be an obstacle in the future.)

Ben futbol oyna-ya-ma-mış-ım (I apparently could not play football). — (Reported past: I wanted to, but couldn't; I heard this from someone else.)

Ben futbol oyna-ya-ma-dı-m (I couldn't play football). — (Definite past: I wanted to, but there was an obstacle.)

2. Meaning: Prohibition / Denying Permission (*Yasak / izin vermeme*)

Structure: fiil (verb) + -(y)A + -mA (negative suffix) + simple present tense person suffix

This meaning is expressed only in present tense (*geniş zaman*).

Buraya park edemezsiniz (You cannot park here). Kütüphanede yüksek sesle konuşamazsınız (You cannot speak loudly in the library). Eve geç gelemezsin (You cannot come home late).

3. Meaning: Probability / Possibility / Volitional Choice (*Tahmin / olasılık / isteğe bağlı durum*)

Structure: fiil (verb) + -ma / -me (negation suffix) + -yAbil + simple present tense suffix + person suffix

Used only in simple present tense (*geniş zaman*).

Bu akşam yağmur yağmayabilir (It may not rain tonight). — (prediction) *Sizinle sinemaya gelmeyebilirim (I may choose not to come to the cinema with you).* — (volitional choice) *Yarınki toplantıya katılmayabilirsin (You may choose not to attend the meeting tomorrow).* — (optional) *Öğretmenimiz sınavda zor soru sormayabilir (Our teacher may not ask difficult questions in the exam).* — (possibility) *Sınavı geçmeyebiliriz (We might not pass the exam).* — (probability)

4. Meaning: Possibility of an Obstacle Arising (*Engel çıkma olasılığı*)

Structure: fiil (verb) + -AmAyAbil + simple present tense suffix + person suffix

Used only in simple present tense (geniş zaman).

Annem izin verecek mi bilmiyorum, bu yüzden sizinle sinemaya gelemeyebilirim (I'm not sure if my mom will allow me, so I may not be able to come to the cinema with you). — (desire exists, but there may be an obstacle)

Discussion

This study explored how the Turkish ability verb (-Abil) is presented in widely used textbooks designed for teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Although all examined textbooks include the ability verb at the A2 level, the findings reveal that the explanations and examples are limited in scope and context. Particularly in the Yeni Hitit and Gazi TÖMER textbooks, form–meaning–use integration is missing, and the functional diversity of the ability verb (e.g., permission, advice, prohibition, prediction) is not sufficiently represented. Similar inconsistencies were reported by Karatay and Kaya (2019), who emphasized that grammatical topics related to modality and ability are not consistently covered in Turkish language teaching (TLT) materials. Likewise, Fidan (2016) found that teachers frequently supplement grammar instruction with external materials due to the insufficiency of textbook explanations.

In light of these findings, it becomes clear that grammar teaching in Turkish as a foreign language needs to move beyond rule memorization toward a more communicative and contextualized approach. Loewen et al. (2009) highlighted that learners respond more positively to grammar instruction when grammatical structures are embedded in meaningful contexts. Similarly, Katz and Watzinger-Tharp (2009) stressed the importance of making grammar both comprehensible and communicative. The inadequacy of contextual support observed in the analyzed textbooks suggests that learners may struggle to internalize the communicative value of the ability verb, resulting in limited transfer to real-life situations.

According to Ellis (2020), effective grammar pedagogy requires that learners not only understand linguistic forms but also recognize their pragmatic functions in authentic discourse. In this respect, explicit attention to the form–meaning–use relationship—originally conceptualized by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999)—is essential for achieving communicative competence. Borg and Burns (2022) further argue that integrating explicit grammar instruction with communication-oriented practice allows learners to apply grammar more fluently in interaction. In the context of Turkish, the ability verb offers ideal potential for such integration because it naturally appears in requests,

permissions, possibilities, and capability expressions, all of which align with real communicative needs.

From a broader pedagogical perspective, Nassaji and Fotos (2019) and Spada (2021) emphasize that grammar teaching should employ a balance of form-focused and meaning-focused instruction. The textbooks analyzed, however, rely mostly on mechanical drills rather than guided discovery or communicative tasks. A task-based and reflective approach (Long, 2016; Tavakoli, 2025) could improve this situation by encouraging learners to notice how the ability verb operates across contexts. For example, students could participate in role-plays that involve asking for permission or expressing ability in authentic dialogues, which reinforces both grammatical accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness.

In recent years, corpus-informed pedagogy has provided valuable insights into how grammatical forms are used in authentic discourse. Gilquin and Granger (2020) show that exposing learners to real frequency data enhances awareness of functional grammar. This is especially relevant given Aksan et al. (2017)'s corpus findings that the ability suffix (-Abil) is one of the most frequent morphemes in Turkish. Therefore, integrating corpus data into textbook design would help learners connect structural forms with actual usage patterns and discourse contexts.

Finally, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2021) underlines that grammatical accuracy must be developed in harmony with communicative objectives. The inconsistent treatment of the ability verb across A2-level textbooks shows a misalignment with this principle. To bridge this gap, Turkish language materials should incorporate the FMU model explicitly and design communicative activities that allow learners to practice grammatical structures meaningfully. In this way, learners' grammatical awareness, pragmatic competence, and motivation can be strengthened simultaneously, resulting in more effective language acquisition.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical findings of this study, the following conclusions and data-driven recommendations are proposed:

The analysis revealed that the textbooks (especially Gazi and Yeni Hitit) predominantly focus on the "ability" function of the suffix -Abil, while neglecting its roles in expressing permission, requests, and high-degree probability. Curriculum developers should transition from a "one-form, one-meaning" approach to a "semantic mapping" strategy.

Specifically, instructional materials should include distinct modules for the different functional uses of –Abil to ensure that students can differentiate between a capability statement and a formal request in social contexts. Quantitative data from the analyzed corpora showed that the frequency of the ability suffix is significantly higher than that of the future tense (–AcAk) and necessity (–mAlI) markers in daily Turkish discourse. In light of this frequency gap, the pedagogical sequence in TFL (Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language) curricula should be revised. The –Abil suffix should be introduced earlier or reinforced more intensively than less frequent modal markers to align student output with real-world language exposure. A critical gap was identified in the "Use" dimension of the FMU model; most textbooks provide isolated sentence drills rather than situational dialogues that reflect pragmatic constraints. Practitioners should replace decontextualized grammar exercises with "Task-Based" scenarios. For instance, rather than simply conjugating the verb, students should be placed in simulations (e.g., asking for permission in a library or predicting weather patterns) where the choice of the suffix is dictated by the social necessity of the context. It was observed that the formal (morphological) explanation of –Abil in the "Yeni İstanbul" and "Yedi İklim" sets lacks visual or schematic aids, which may hinder the internalization of the complex vowel harmony and suffixation rules. Textbooks should incorporate schematic flowcharts or visual organizers based on the FMU triad. This will allow learners to visually categorize the morphological structure alongside its semantic and pragmatic implications, facilitating a more holistic cognitive processing of the grammar unit.

To address the current gaps in the literature and meet the requirements of high-impact indexing standards, this research provides distinctive contributions across three primary dimensions:

1. Theoretical Contribution: This study advances the theoretical application of the "Form–Meaning–Use" (FMU) framework within the specific context of Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language (TFL). By shifting the focus from purely morphological descriptions of the ability verb (–Abil) to a multidimensional communicative model, the research provides a robust conceptual basis for integrating grammatical accuracy with semantic depth and pragmatic appropriateness.

2. Methodological Contribution: From a methodological standpoint, the research transitions beyond conventional descriptive textbook reviews. It establishes a systematic and replicable evaluation matrix based on the

FMU dimensions. By analysing and comparing four major TLT sets (Gazi, Yeni Hitit, Yeni İstanbul, and Yedi İklim) under identical analytical criteria, the study offers a standardized benchmark for future comparative linguistics and textbook evaluation studies.

3. Practical and Pedagogical Contribution: The most significant applied contribution is the development of a "Communicative Instructional Design. This proposal serves as a pragmatic roadmap for educators and curriculum designers, moving the instruction of the ability verb from abstract rules to functional usage scenarios (e.g., probability, permission, and requests). Furthermore, the empirical evidence regarding the high frequency of (-Abil) compared to other suffixes provides a data-driven justification for re-prioritizing grammatical sequences in TFL curricula.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this research is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. For example, the scope is restricted to the analysis of four primary Turkish teaching sets (Gazi, Yeni Hitit, Yeni İstanbul, and Yedi İklim) at the A2 proficiency level. While these materials are the most widely used in the field, other supplementary resources or digital learning platforms were not included in this evaluation. In addition, the study focuses exclusively on document analysis, meaning it examines the instructional content of textbooks rather than observing real time classroom applications or teacher-student interactions. Consequently, how teachers might compensate for the identified textbook deficiencies through additional materials remains outside the current scope. Lastly, although the FMU model provides a robust pedagogical framework, its effectiveness for the Turkish ability verb (-Abil) has been presented here as a theoretical proposal and has yet to be tested through longitudinal experimental studies in a classroom setting.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

The authors contributed equally to this work (50% each).

Ethics Approval

This research does not involve human participants or animal subjects and does not require ethics committee approval.

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Conflict of Interest

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