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## THE USE OF ARABIC COGNATE *ESTAĞFURULLAH* IN TURKISH LANGUAGE AS A DISCOURSE MARKER: A CORPUS DRIVEN RESEARCH

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### Abstract

*This study aims to investigate the use of Arabic cognate *estağfurullah* as a discourse marker in Turkish language. *Estağfurullah* in Turkish is mainly used by an interlocutor to show courtesy and modesty when s/he is appreciated or thanked. After examining the naturally occurring text of written data through a corpus-based qualitative research using the Turkish National Corpus (TNC), the frequency occurrences of *estağfurullah*, its syntactic location and functions were identified. Its distributions were analyzed through blending of one-to-one searching and sifting methods. Its query returned 234 hits in 112 different naturally occurring texts of written data. In more than half of the hits (143), it was found that *estağfurullah* was mostly used in the initial position of an utterance with various collocations. What is more, it was used for different interactional functions ranging from showing courtesy and modesty, statement of agreement/disagreement or religion to expressing affective states; anger and helplessness, taking an offence and face-saving act.*

**Keywords:** *Estağfurullah*, discourse marker, Turkish, Turkish National Corpus (TNC), collocations.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Corpus and Corpus Linguistics

Technology has considerably influenced the way we learn, teach and study the language. Thanks to technology, we can collect, record, analyze and access unlimited data sources stored on computers or digital platforms, which contributed to the development of “corpus linguistics. Corpus refers to the systematic collection of naturally occurring text of written or spoken language which is typically stored as database in computer and Corpus Linguistics refers to the systematic analysis of naturally occurring language based on computerized corpora, samples (Mukherjee, 2011). Although corpus is associated with the collection process through a computer, it can also refer to any principled text collections that have not been computerized (Meyer, 2002).

When corpus linguistics first appeared, it was taught to be inapplicable to studies of language use beyond the sentence boundaries, that is, discourse studies (Conrad, 2002). Even though discourse studies used actual text, most of them did not use quantitative methods to come up with generalizable findings across texts (Biber, Conrad & Reppen, 1998). However, Corpus Linguistics has recently been a part of the mainstream linguistics (Mukherjee, 2011) and many discourse related issues could not be addressed without corpus-based techniques (Conrad, 2002).

### Corpus Based Research Methods

In the case of discourse analysis, to locate a particular function of linguistic forms, four main retrieval methods are used and they are believed to be representative of the field (Ädel & Reppen, 2011). The first one is called one-to-one searching, in which the query of a linguistic form returns only relevant hits. For example, when the query “*estağfurullah*” is searched, it returns no irrelevant hits and the exact intended set is captured. Then, the researcher can examine the different discourse functions or semantic distinctions of the search term.

The second search method is called sampling (Ädel 2003), in which when one or more good examples of the linguistic phenomenon are searched only a subset is captured. The search terms can yield a high number of relevant hits. Although it is too difficult to cover all bases or to map out the entire linguistic functions in question, a lot of valuable insights can be acquired. For example, occurrences of laughter are used as proxy that represents the role of humor in the workplace.

Sifting is the third search method which involves manually discarding some proportion of the initially retrieved hits before the actual analysis. Although checking the retrieved data requires a great deal of time, the remaining set after sifting includes most of the potential forms of the linguistic phenomenon in question. For example, the informal intensifiers *so* and *really* are searched as a small subset of an extensive inventory of linguistic forms related face-to-face conversation anaphoric *so* and *really* as a news recipient are sifted from the initial hits.

In the frequency-based listing, the fourth method (Ädel & Reppen, 2011), a frequency list of individual words or collocations is used to select the relevant search terms that occur with high frequency. Then, the search terms are tailored for the corpus and the particular discourse studied. For instance, after the relevant expressions of vagueness to be focused on are identified based on a frequency list of multi-word clusters, they can be concordanced and analyzed. As a final point, it can be said using only one method at a time is not a requirement. A blending method of two or more of these four search methods mentioned above can be used, too.

### Discourse Markers

The concept of discourse marker (henceforth, DM) is interchangeably used for ‘discourse particle’ (Schourup, 1999; Adıgüzel, 2015), ‘pragmatic particle’ (Lenk, 1998) and ‘pragmatic marker’ (Andersen, 2001). In the early of 1960s, the analysis of discourse markers was triggered by the fact that certain types of words can function differently in different positions in a sentence (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2004). In the 1970s, the researches on DMs focused on the semantic functions of single utterances (Risselada & Spooren, 1988), whereas a number of studies have investigated the semantic and pragmatic functions, and the distributions of DMs (e.g. Özbek, 2000; Yılmaz, 2004; Büyükkantarcioglu, 2006; Bal-Gezegin, 2013, Erdoğan, 2013; Ruhi, 2013; Babanoğlu, 2014; Adıgüzel, 2015).

### *Estağfurullah* as a DM

The DM *estağfurullah* in Turkish is used by an interlocutor to show courtesy and modesty when s/he is appreciated or thanked. The Turkish Language Association (TDK) gives the following Turkish definition of *estağfurullah*: “*İncelik ve alçak gönüllülük göstermek üzere teşekkür edilen veya övülen bir kimsenin söylediği bir söz*”. In Arabic, syntactically, it is a sentence that consists of (NP) + VP + NP and semantically, it means “I ask God to forgive me”. Based on morphological analysis, the root is ğ-f-r (ğufr) and the prefix e-s-t, which contains the meanings of *I demand/ask/request/expect*, is added. So, the combination of the prefix and the root e-s-t-ğ-f-r (*estağfiru*) literally means *I want to...*, which is followed by the object *Allah*. The original form *estağfiru-Allah-e* becomes *estağfirullah* due to the contraction process specific to Arabic language. The sentence *estağfirullah* undergoes sound changes after being borrowed into Turkish. The *I* vowel sound becomes *u* and it is used as a single unit as *estağfurullah*. Along with the syntactic and phonetic transformation, there is also a semantic transformation in due course.

### Theoretical Framework

Context is the main important element of language communication and DMs are studied in terms of functions, semantic and grammatical status based on the distribution their positions within

the discourse and their co-occurrence with other linguistic elements (Schiffrin, 1987; Aijmer, 2002). That is why; discourse analysis lays the theoretical foundation of this study.

The following research questions are employed in this study:

1. What is the frequency of the Arabic Cognate *estağfurullah* in Turkish National Corpus?
2. What are the functions of *estağfurullah* in Turkish language based on naturally occurring text?
3. What is the syntactic position of *estağfurullah* in Turkish sentences?

#### METHODOLOGY: A CORPUS-BASED APPROACH

To analyze the distributions of the DM *estağfurullah*, this study used blending of *one-to-one searching* and *sifting* methods mentioned above based on the Turkish National Corpus (TNC). The TNC is a corpus of contemporary Turkish with a size of 50 million words from samples of textual data across a wide variety of genres and topics. Spoken data consists of spontaneous, everyday conversations and speeches collected in particular communicative settings and it constitutes 2% of TNC's database, which covers a period of 20 years (1990-2009). 4438 different text samples are included in its TNC-Demo Version that represents 9 domains and 34 different genres. From a size of 48 million words collection, users can perform queries by filtering outputs from media, text sample, domain, derived text type, sex of author, type of author, text genre, as well as the audience of the text (Aksan, 2012).

#### RESULT OF CORPUS ANALYSIS

The frequency occurrences of the DM *estağfurullah*, its syntactic location and functions were analyzed and identified.

#### Frequency Occurrences of *Estağfurullah*

According to the distribution output from the search with the help TNC, the query *estağfurullah* returned 234 hits in 112 different naturally occurring texts of written data (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** General distribution.

No. of words	Documents (total)	No. of hits	Dispersion (over files)	Frequency per million words
47.641.688	4.434	234	122/4436	4.91

#### Syntactic Positions of *Estağfurullah*

It rarely stands alone as an utterance and it is used with certain collocations such as *tövbe*, *efendim*, *ne haddimize*, *paşam*, *ne münasebet*, *buyrun* and *beyefendi* (see Table 2). In more than half of the hits (143), *estağfurullah* was found in the initial position of an utterance as in *Estağfurullah ne haddimize!* And rarely appeared in utterance middle as in *Aman canım estağfurullah ne haddimize!* Or final position as in *Tövbe estağfurullah!*.

**Table 2.** Collocations.

Collocations	<i>Tövbe</i>	<i>efendim</i>	<i>ne haddimize</i>	<i>paşam</i>	<i>Ne münasebet</i>	<i>Buyrun</i>	<i>beyefendi</i>
Number of hits	34	25	12	4	2	2	2

It is used in various contextual domains, and the highest percentage belongs to *imaginative prose* (See Table 3).

**Table 3.** Domains.

Category	No. of words	Documents (total)	No. of hits	Dispersion (over files)		Frequency per million words
Imaginative prose	9202960	681	142	60.68%	73	2.98
Natural & pure sciences	1404211	258	1	0.43%	1	0.02
Applied science	3411894	472	0	0%	0	0
Social science	6926467	686	18	7.69%	7	0.38
World affairs	9549676	774	19	8.12%	15	0.4
Commerce & finance	4380870	440	0	0%	0	0
Arts	3574523	356	25	10.68%	8	0.52
Belief & thought	2052534	232	2	0.85%	1	0.04

Table 3 continued...

Leisure	7138553	537	27	11.54%	17	0.57
Total	47641688	4436	234		122	4.91

It can be found both in formal and informal contexts. Among the audience, it is mostly used by adults (See Table 4).

Table 4. Audience.

Category	No. of words	Documents (total)	No. of hits	Dispersion (over files)	Frequency per million words
Child	1358099	125	7	2.99%	0.15
Teenager	914251	59	7	2.99%	0.15
Adult	41823669	4006	213	91.03%	4.47
Any	3518244	244	7	2.99%	0.15
Total	47614263	4434	234		4.91

Based on gender, men use it five times more than women, at 187 hits and 85 different files which constitutes about %80 (See Table 5).

Table 5. Sex.

Category	No. of words	Documents (total)	No. of hits	Dispersion (over files)	Frequency per million words
Female	7324441	824	35	14.96%	0.73
Male	25057950	2445	187	79.91%	3.93
Mixed	15259297	1167	12	5.13%	0.25
Total	47641688	4436	234		4.91

As for retrieved text type, *fiction and verse* has the highest percentage after *non-academic prose*, however; according to genre, it is most commonly used in *novel/short stories* (115 hits), which is followed by *popular magazines* and *biographies/autobiographies* (See Table 6).

Table 6. Genre and retrieved text type.

Category	No. of words	Documents (total)	No. of hits	Dispersion (over files)	Frequency per million words
Novels/short stories	8193820	572	115	49.15%	2.41
Biographies/Autobiographies	2324741	160	17	7.26%	0.36
Popular magazines	668539	48	17	7.26%	0.36
Fiction and verse	9173192	677	142	60.68%	2.98
Non-academic prose	11993681	772	76	32.48%	1.6

### Interactional Functions of *Estağfurullah*

Based on the concordance, the irrelevant proportions of the initially retrieved hits were manually discarded before the actual analysis. Then, the functions of *estağfurullah* were analyzed and identified and the remaining set after sifting included most of the potential functions of *estağfurullah*. It can be said *estağfurullah* has several different interactional functions and one of the main functions is to show courtesy as in the following Excerpt 1:

#### Excerpt 1 SD36C3A-0070 Showing courtesy

*Başgardiyan RG, yirmi kadar TBMM başlıklı zarfı getirdi, en üste birini ayırmış, zarfları verirken, "Yalçın Bey gözünüz aydın!..." dedi. "Teşekkür ederim başefendi." "Yalçın Bey sizden bir istirhamım olacak." "Estağfurullah buyrun."*

The head guard asks his superior to do him a favor saying "... sizden bir istirhamım olacak", which is equivalent to *I may kindly ask something of you*. To this expression, his superior replies saying "*estağfurullah*", which is equivalent to *of course, please! go ahead*.

Another interactional function of *estağfurullah* is to express modesty as in Excerpt 2:

Excerpt 2 **QD43C1A-0286** Expressing modesty

*Bazı konuklar çok doludur; siz onlardan biri ve onların en önde gelenlerinden birisiniz. Yani, bu gece ben ve izleyicilerimiz aslında koltuklarına yaslanıp sizi tek başına dinleseler yetecek, doyacaklar. - Estağfurullah, rica ederim.*

Here, the host of a TV show flatters the guest saying he is a well-read person (someone who has read many books and knows a lot about different subjects). The guest uses *estağfurullah* as an answer equivalent to *thank you / that is very kind of you*.

*Estağfurullah* is also used as a statement of agreement to do something as in the following Excerpt 3 where the female interlocutor offers something that is socially undesirable to state explicitly and the male speaker uses *estağfurullah* as an answer implying that he agrees to do so.

Excerpt 3 **UE36E1B-3357** Statement of agreement

*iharet edeceğim" dedim. "Bakarız" dedi. Akşam buluştuk. Yücel yanında bir adamla geldi. Adamın nasıl olduğunu hatırlamıyorum bile. Adam işte, erkek! "Merhaba"dan sonra "Bu akşam benimle beraber olur musun" dedim. Adam "Estağfurullah" dedi. Bu okey demekti tabii.*

In the Excerpt 4 below, *estağfurullah* is used to indicate disagreement with a previous statement.

Excerpt 4 **QA16B3A-0617** Statement of disagreement

*Yakınlaşmayı başaramıyordum bu kadına. Pes ettim, bıraktım kendi haline. Hem deli birine nasıl yaklaşabilirim ki? Ne malum az sonra üstüme yürümeyeceği? "Deli olduğumu düşünüyorsun benim, değil mi?" "Yok canım, estağfurullah."*

The woman asks if the man thinks she is crazy: 'Deli olduğumu düşünüyorsun benim, değil mi?', equivalent to "You think I am crazy, don't you?". The man responds saying "Yok canım, estağfurullah", which roughly means "No dear, of course I don't".

*Estağfurullah* is also used as a religious statement as it is originally used. In the following Excerpt 5, the speaker is worried about the other person who might have done something religiously wrong and while explaining this, he uses "tövbe, estağfurullah" to indicate that he asks God to forgive him if there is something wrong with his explanation.

Excerpt 5 **KA16B2A-1335** Religious statement

*Sonra da tamamen yumuşayıp devam etmişti. "Bu din tefsir edildi oğlum... Tövbe estağfurullah, sana mı kalmış yeniden tefsir etmek?.. Çok günah!.. bak, yanarsın bak!"*

Excerpt 6 **SD36C3A-0070** Face-saving act

*Eee.. Efendim Akif bey ünlü üüü.. yapımcımız, senaristimiz, ııı... yönetmenimiz, barmenimiz. Aaa.. Atıf Yormaz ile Harun Refiğ yönetmen oluyorlar eee... BAKAN: Çok memnun oldum. Gelelim sizin meselenize. Buyurun emredin. AKİF: Estağfurullah, ricamız olabilir ancak... Malumualiniz Türk sinemasının içinde bulunduğu durum. BAKAN: Biliyorum, haberim var. Kurtaracağım. Allahın izniyle, Atatürk'ün kavliyle Türk sinemasına da çağ atlatacağız. Bundan sonra Altın Portakal yerine Altın Oskar*

In the Excerpt 6 above, *estağfurullah* is used as a face-saving act. The minister, who has social power, asks the director what he wants using "*buyrun, emredin*", which is equivalent to *I am at your service*. The director makes his request less threatening to the minister's self-image by saying "*Estağfurullah, ricamız olabilir ancak*", which can be equivalent to *All I can do is just to request not to command*. Using a direct speech act to get someone to do something without having more social power than the other person causes a face threatening act.

*Estağfurullah* is also used in various affective states such as being angry, taking an offence and feeling embarrassed. In the following Excerpt 7, an elder man calls a younger woman and shows her a key. The woman takes his act as sexual harassment and scolds him saying: “*Amca, utanmıyor musun bu yaşta?*”, which can be equivalent to *Sir, aren’t you ashamed of yourself and you are that old?*). Surprised by her offensive reaction, the man asks what happened and she says that he teased her by showing the key. Feeling offended, he says “*tövbe estağfurullah*” and explains that it was her key that she dropped out of her bag.

Excerpt 7 **QA16B3A-0617** Expressing an offence

"*Amca, utanmıyor musun bu yaşta?*" "*Neden kızım? Ne oldu?*" "*Bana anahtarını gösteriyorsun.*" "*Tövbe estağfurullah. İnsan dediğin önce anlayıp dinler, sonra itham eder. Al şu anahtarını da yürü git işine. Çantandan düşürdün, vereyim derken de tazı gibi seçirttin kaçtın.*"

*Estağfurullah* can also be used in an emotional state where a user is angry and helpless about something that irritates or bothers as in the following Excerpt 8: the educator is angry with the pupil who refuses to attend the religion class and states that he is not late and he just don't want to attend. Feeling angry and helpless, the educator utters “*Yav!.. Tövbeestağfurullah yav!*”, he takes him to the principal as the cannot handle the situation publicly.

Excerpt 8 **KA16B2A-1335** Expressing anger & helplessness

*çocuk çark eder diye, gözlerini çok kızmış gibi belertip sormuştu: "Buyur? Ne dedin bakıyım sen?" "Din dersi dinlemek istemiyorum dedim. Geç de kalmadım. Kendim gelmedim sadece. Anladınız mı?" Yav!.. Tövbeestağfurullah yav!.. Buna el de kalkmaz!.. N'apacaz milletin ortasında simdik?.. Hah!.. "Gel bakalım sen benle müdüriyete. Bi de orda söyle bakalım ne söyleyeceksen." "Söyleriim." "Yürü bakalım... hadi bakalım..."*

## CONCLUSION

Smoothing the interaction and making everyday conversations coherent are the primary characteristics of DMs which are flexibly employed in different syntactic positions and semantic functions (Schiffrin, 1987). That is, they do not refer to a specific meaning on their own and they do not appear in a specific position in an utterance. Based on these aspects of DMs, this study aimed to investigate the interactional functions of the DM *estağfurullah*, its frequency of occurrences, its syntactic positions and semantic functions since it is frequently and subconsciously used in Turkish in everyday conversations with multiple functions. The results from the Turkish National Corpus (TNC) revealed that *estağfurullah* was mostly used in the initial position of an utterance despite its rare use in the middle and final positions and it was used with various lexical items. Along with being mainly used by an interlocutor to show courtesy and modesty, it was used for various interactional functions such as *statement of agreement/disagreement* or *religion to expressing affective states; anger and helplessness, taking an offence and face-saving act*. The flexibility of the syntactic locations and variety of interactional functions of *estağfurullah* helps Turkish speakers perform everyday conversations more smoothly and more coherently.

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