



## A Text-Based Analysis of Turkish Existential Sentences Türkçe'deki Varoluşsal Tümcelerin Metin Temelli İncelemesi

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### Abstract

This study analyses and discusses the use of existential sentences in texts in terms of the existential predicates used and types of these constructions. The sample of the study includes forty government programs published in Turkey between 1950 and 2016. As a result of the analysis 192 existential sentences are identified in the sample. Existential sentences are described and categorized based on the existential predicates and the sentence types. The findings show that the default form of the existential predicates is *var+Dir* in official documents although there are other predicates employed in existential constructions, including *yok* “not exist”, *mevcut* “exist”, *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to”. Of them the first three are the predicates of existence, and the remaining two are the predicates of possession. It should be noted that all of these existential predicates are mostly attached with *-Dir*. Concerning the types of existential sentences it is found that the government programs analysed include four different types and mostly contain possessive type of existentials. The other three types of existential constructions found in the sample are as follows: locative existentials, modal existentials and bare existentials. It is also identified that these existential constructions have specific structural properties which vary based on the existential predicates used. Each type of existential constructions performs several textual functions which are consistent with their structural and semantic properties. In regard to the existential predicates it is found that the predicates of existence, namely *var* “exist”, *yok* “not exist” and *mevcut* “exist”, are much more productive than those of possession, *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to”. Because the latter type is limited to the possessive type of existential sentences and is not employed in other three types of existential constructions.

**Keywords:** Existential sentences, existential predicates, textual analysis, nominal predicates, official language.

### Öz

Çalışmada varoluşsal tümceler bu tümcelerde kullanılan yüklemeler ile bu tümcelerin türleri bakımından incelenerek ele alınmaktadır. Çalışmada 1950 ve 2016 yılları arasında Türkiye’de yayınlanan 40 adet hükümet programında saptanan varoluşsal tümceler incelenmektedir. İnceleme sonucunda örnekleme yer alan metinlerde toplam 192 varoluşsal tümce olduğu saptanmıştır. Bu tümceler kullanılan varoluşsal yüklemeler ile tümce türleri dikkate alınarak belirlenip sınıflandırılmıştır. Çalışmada ulaşılan bulgular resmi dilde *var+Dir* biçiminde görülen *var* yüklemelinin en sık kullanılan yüklem olduğunu ve *var* yüklemelinin yanı sıra *yok*, *sahip*, *mevcut* and *ait* yüklemelerinin de hükümet programlarında saptanan varoluşsal tümcelerde kullanıldığını göstermektedir. Sözkonusu yüklemeler iki kümeye ayrılmaktadır: varlık bildiren yüklemeler, *var*, *yok* ve *mevcut* ve iyelik bildiren yüklemeler, *sahip* ve *ait*. Çalışmada incelenen metinlerde her iki kümede yer alan varoluşsal yüklemelerin her birinin çoğunlukla *-Dir* ekiyle kullanıldığını ortaya çıkmıştır. Varoluşsal tümcelerin türleri bakımından hükümet programlarında dört farklı türde varoluşsal tümce olduğu ve en sık iyelik belirten varoluşsal tümcelere yer verildiği bulunmuştur. Saptanan diğer varoluşsal tümce türleri ise şunlardır: yer bildiren tümceler, kiplik bildiren tümceler ve düz varoluşsal tümcelerdir. Çalışmada ulaşılan bulgulara göre her bir tümce türünün kullanılan yükleme dayalı olarak kendine özgü yapısal

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özellikleri bulunmaktadır. Öe yandan bu tümce türleri metinlerde yapısal ve anlambilimsel özellikleriyle uyumlu işlevleri gerçekleştirmektedir. Varoluşsal tümcelerde kullanılan yüklem türleri açısından varlık bildiren yüklem türleri olan *var*, *yok* ve *mevcut* yüklem türlerinin *sahip* ve *ait* gibi iyelik yüklem türlerine oranla daha fazla üretken oldukları bulunmuştur. Bunun nedeni iyelik bildiren yüklem türleri olan *sahip* ve *ait* yüklem türlerinin sadece iyelik anlamı içeren varoluşsal tümcelerde kullanılması ve diğer üç varoluşsal tümce türünde kullanılmamasıdır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Varoluşsal tümceler, varoluşsal yüklem türleri, metin incelemesi, adıl yüklem türleri, resmi söylem.

## Introduction

Existential sentences generally indicate the presence or absence of something or somebody (McNally 2011, p.1830). In English such constructions have the following unmarked structure which is made up of expletives, copulas, pivots and codas as exemplified in (1):

(1)	There	is	something	(here).
	Expletive	Copula	Pivot	(Coda)

These components are subject to crosslinguistic variations. Of them, the pivots are the only universal and obligatory part of the existential sentences (Bentley et. al. 2013) which function as the subject of existential sentences. Codas or locative phrases and expletives are not used in all languages (Bentley et. al. 2013). Similarly, copulas do not also have a common form across languages.

Although existential sentences have been described in relation to the syntactic and semantic properties, and information structure status in Turkish (Sansa Tura 1986a; Erguvanlı Taylan 1987; Göksel and Kerslake 2005 among others), the use of Turkish existential constructions in texts has been relatively less analysed. In addition, as Ariel (2002) argues, naturally occurring data are needed to describe discourse functions of linguistic structures including existential constructions. Therefore, this study examines Turkish existential sentences in government programs to uncover their structural properties, including the predicates used and types which are required to discuss the discourse functions of these constructions. Based on this aim the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- Which predicates are used in existential sentences produced in Turkish official texts and what are the basic structural properties of these sentences?
- Which types of existential sentences are employed in the official texts in Turkish? What are the main textual functions of these types of existentials?

This article is structured as follows: Next section lays out background information on existential sentences focusing on their uses in different text types. Then there is a brief description on existential sentences in Turkish. It is followed by the introduction of the materials and method of the study. Following it the analysis of Turkish existential sentences in government programs is presented focusing on the existential predicates and the types of existential constructions. Last section reports the results of the analysis.

## Existential Sentences

Existential sentences have certain pragmatic and discourse functions which are closely related to their information structure. Existentials arethetic constructions composed of focused entities which are mostly the pivots. In line with this information status major pragmatic and discourse function of existential sentences is to introduce a new entity in discourse. Based on this function existential constructions are commonly termed as presentational sentences. The other function of the existential sentences is reported to reintroduce entities in discourse. Semantic features of the existentials are also connected with their pragmatic and discourse functions. In short, these constructions assert the existence or presence of an entity or an event.

In addition existential constructions perform certain textual functions. Biber (1988) asserts that existential sentences serve to elaborate information presented in texts. There are several studies analysing existential sentences in distinct text types to describe their structural and discourse features. For instance, Jiang & Hyland (2019) examine the existential sentences in academic discourse. They conclude that these

sentences are used to create an interaction with readers and to make the claims of the authors much more reliable in academic discourse. Sun & Cheng (2015) investigate English existential sentences in trial transcripts which are part of spoken legal language. Similar to the findings reported by Jiang & Hyland (2020) their findings indicate that existential constructions have the function of creating an interactional exchange of information in spoken legal language.

The structure of existentials has also been described and explored in various text types. For instance, Martinez Insua (2002) analyses English existential sentences in a subcorpus of British national corpus to reveal the verbs that are employed in these sentences. She concludes that in addition to the verb *be* existential constructions are also produced with other verbs such as *seem*, *remain*, *follow* which convey the meaning of being, existence and position. Crawford (2005) investigates the variation in relation to concord or subject-verb agreement in present-day American English existential sentences. The study employs the samples from different registers, including conversations, textbooks, lectures, fiction texts and chats. Based on the findings Crawford (2005) argues that although registers contain existential constructions which differ in terms of concord or subject-verb agreement, all of these constructions serve to organize discourse. Hiltunen and Tykkö (2011) deal with *there*-existentials in a corpus consisted of medical texts. They focus on verb choice, the use of modals and polarity in these constructions. They identified twenty different existential verbs used in addition to the verb *be* in these medical texts and found the use of modal auxiliaries in existentials. Olofsson (2011) also examines the structure of existential sentences and potential existential verbs such as *seem* and *appear* using samples taken from British national corpus. The study by Weinert (2013) deals with the distribution and functions of German existential sentences in spoken corpus. Similar to Martinez Insua (2002) and Hiltunen and Tykkö (2011) she identifies various verbs that occur in existential constructions in addition to unmarked verb types. Gécseg (2019) describes the structure of Hungarian existential sentences focusing on the potential sentence positions of the subjects or the pivots. Her sample contains 205 utterances which are compiled through Google search. She concludes that the position of the subjects in Hungarian existential constructions is related to the semantic and pragmatic function of these constructions.

### **Existential Sentences in Turkish**

Existential sentences in Turkish have been studied mostly in terms of structural properties and are described as a subtype of nominal sentences (Sansa Tura 1986a, Erguvanlı Taylan 1987, Göksel & Kerslake 2005 among others). Turkish is reported to have three types of existential sentences (Sansa Tura 1986a, Erguvanlı Taylan 1987, Göksel & Kerslake 2005): locative existential sentences, possessive existential sentences and bare existential sentences which are termed as concealed existentials by Sansa Tura (1986a). Erguvanlı Taylan (1987, p.217) describes the locative type as presentative existentials. It is stated by Göksel & Kerslake (2005) that the types of existential sentences are not mutually exclusive in that each has its own specific grammatical properties.

Locative and possessive types of Turkish existential sentences are exemplified as follows:

- (2) (a) Bahçede kedi var.

‘There is a cat in the garden.’

- (b) Onun arabası var.

‘S/he has a car.’

As can be seen in (2a) which is a locative existential sentence there is a locative phrase or coda *bahçede* “in the garden”, a noun phrase or pivot *kedi* “cat” and an existential predicate *var* “exist”. Clark (1978) describes Turkish as one of thirteen languages in which locative phrases precede the pivot noun phrases. Locative phrases or codas are in fact noun phrases which are marked with locative case ending – *DA*. Such phrases can also be classified as postpositional phrases. One of the striking property of Turkish locative existential sentences as well as of other types of existentials in Turkish is that no expletive is

employed. Therefore, it is seen that in Turkish these sentences consist of coda, pivot and existential predicates. The word order of locative existential sentences is given as follows:

- |     |            |           |                      |
|-----|------------|-----------|----------------------|
| (3) | Bahçede    | keci      | var.                 |
|     | L(ocative) | S(ubject) | E(xistential) V(erb) |
|     | Coda       | Pivot     | Copula               |

The pattern given in (3), namely L + S + EV, is reported to be the default word order of existential sentences in S(ubject) O(bject) V(erb) languages (Freeze 1992).

The other type of existential sentences, namely possessive ones, is exemplified in (2b). These sentences contain a noun phrase marked with genitive ending *-nın* which functions as the subject. The object noun phrase is in agreement with the subject. Existential predicate *var* “exist” is also employed in possessive type of existential sentences in Turkish. The unmarked word order of possessive existentials is as follows:

- |     |                                |                    |                  |
|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| (4) | Onun                           | arabası            | var.             |
|     | Existential possessive subject | Existential object | Existential verb |

Another type of existentials is bare existential constructions which are termed as concealed existential sentences by Sansa Tura (1986a, p.186). Examples of bare existential constructions are illustrated in (5):

- (5) (a) Sınava bir hafta var.  
 “There is a week until the exam.”  
 (b) Bu gece kar yok.  
 “There is no snow tonight.”

As observed in (5) bare existential sentences do not contain a uniform pattern of elements other than the pivot NP and existential predicates, *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist”. Such constructions do not include any locative phrase or coda (Francez 2009) or existential objects. Sansa Tura (1986a:186) argues that unlike locative and possessive existentials bare existentials do not have a corresponding copular sentence. Francez (2009) adds that bare existential sentences are context-dependent. Therefore, these sentences get their meaning from the preceding sentences.

In addition to these three types existential constructions have another category which is termed as deontic existentials. Remberger (2013) argues that deontic existential constructions are observed in some languages such as Italian and Sardinian. Although such constructions are not mentioned in the studies on Turkish existential sentences, the following examples show that in Turkish there are also similar existential constructions which can be termed as modal existentials. In short, instead of using the term deontic existentials the term modal existentials is employed to describe these constructions in that such existentials appear to contain both deontic and epistemic lexical modals. Sentences in (6) are the examples of these constructions:

- (6) (a) Öğrencinin kitaba ihtiyacı var.  
 “The student needs a book.”  
 (b) Senin çalışmana gerek yok.  
 “You do not need to study.”  
 (c) Arkadaşların gelme ihtimali var.  
 “It is likely that our friends will come.”

As can be seen in (6) modal existentials include a noun phrase marked with genitive ending *-nın* which is the subject or pivot of the sentence. Existential predicates *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” are also

used in such existential sentences. The defining structural property of these sentences is the lexical modals such as *ihtiyaç* “need”, *gerek* “need” or *ihtimal* “possibility” which appear in pre-verbal position. Put differently, these constructions include a lexical modal which precedes the existential predicates.

These lexical modals may represent either deontic modality or epistemic modality. It is certain that semantic status of these constructions are closely related to the type of lexical modal contained in the sentence. For instance, those containing deontic modality through lexical items such as *gerek* “need” or *ihtiyaç* “need” have different meaning in contrast to those which involve epistemic lexical modals including *ihtimal* “possibility” and *şüph*e “doubt”. More specifically, deontic modality refers to the obligations or giving permission (Downing & Locke 1992). Epistemic modality, on the other hand, refers to the speaker’s confidence or lack of confidence in regard to the truth of the proposition expressed in the sentence and is a subjective form of modality (Coates 1987, p.112).

## Materials and Method

The sentences analysed in the study are taken from government programs published in Turkey between 1950 and 2016. A total of forty government programs was examined in the study. First the sentences which contained an existential meaning were categorized based on the existential predicates used. Then the types of existential sentences were identified.

Within each category, namely category based on existential predicates and category based on existential sentence types, the related structures and types were identified, and their frequency and percentage were found using the descriptive statistics.

In the categorization of the types of existential sentences the following structural properties were taken into consideration. Concerning the possessive existential constructions the pattern (4) guided the classification which is repeated as (7) below:

(7)	Existential possessive subject	Existential object	Existential predicate
	Öğrenci-nin	kalem-i	var/yok.
	student-GEN	pencil-POSS	EXIST/NOT EXIST
	“The student has a pencil./The student does not have a pencil.”		

Locative existentials in the sample are identified based on the following properties:

(8)	Locative phrase	Subject	Existential predicate
	Bahçe-de	keci	var/yok.
	garden-LOC	cat.NOM	EXIST/NOT EXIST
	“There is a cat in the garden. / There is not a cat in the garden.”		

If any lexical modal either deontic or epistemic is used before the existential predicates such constructions are classified as modal existential constructions based on the following sentence structure property:

(9)	... Lexical deontic modal	Existential predicate
	ihtiyaç/ olasılık	var/yok.
	need / possibility	EXIST/NOT EXIST
	“There is a need/ a possibility to ...”	

Bare existential sentences are identified on the basis of the fact that there should be no coda or locative phrase or a lexical deontic modal in the sentence, but a subject and an existential predicate as shown in (10):

(10)	Subject	Existential predicate
	kar	var/yok.
	snow	EXIST/NOT EXIST
	“There is snow. / There is no snow.”	

In addition to these structural properties in some instances the categorization of the existential sentence types was carried out based on the predicates employed in the sentences. Because some of these structures become different as a result of the predicate used.

### Analysis of the Findings

Total number of existential constructions found in the government programs is 192. The findings obtained are discussed in relation to two dimensions: existential predicates used and the types of existential sentences. In the latter dimension the structure of the sentences are also described based on the predicates used. Furthermore, the distribution of the existential predicates is analysed based on their occurrence in each existential sentence type. Whenever an example is presented the number of the government program from which the sentence was taken is given in paranthesis.

### Findings on existential predicates

As stated above it is commonly stated that Turkish existential sentences are formed through the predicates *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” (Sansa Tura 1986a; Göksel & Kerslake 2005). However, during the course of the analysis it was noticed that there are three other nominal predicates which also produce existential sentences. Such predicates are found to be *mevcut* “exist”, *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to”. Note that these predicates have also nominal origins like *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist”. In short, Turkish, at least official Turkish, has other ways of producing existential constructions expressing the presence and absence of something or somebody and the possession of something. As mentioned above it is not unexpected in that languages may employ several distinct verbs in existential constructions in addition to unmarked forms of existential verbs. The frequency and percentage of all five existential predicates identified in the government programs analysed are given in Table 1:

Table 1. Existential predicate types found in the government programs (n=192)

Predicates	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Var</i> “exist”	99	51.5%
<i>Yok</i> “not exist”	41	21.3%
<i>Sahip</i> “have”	30	15.6%
<i>Mevcut</i> “exist”	20	10.4%
<i>Ait</i> “belong to”	2	1%

As can be observed in Table 1 five different existential predicates are used in the sample: *var* “exist”, *yok* “not exist”, *mevcut* “exist”, *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to”. Of them *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” are often reported as the unmarked existential predicates (Göksel & Kerslake, 2005 among others). However, the other predicates, namely *sahip* “have”, *mevcut* “exist” and *ait* “belong to”, are not described as the predicates of Turkish existential constructions. These three predicates can be termed as either predicates of existence such as *mevcut* “exist” or predicates of possession such as *sahip* “have” and *ait* “have”. Therefore, it can be pointed out that formal language of Turkish has varied ways of producing existential constructions through such predicates.

Table 1 also illustrates that *var* “exist” has the highest frequency in contrast to the other existential predicates (51.5%). In fact, more than half of the existential sentences identified in the study are constructed with this predicate. The other predicates have the following rates: *yok* “not exist” (21.3%), *sahip* “have/possess” (15.6%), *mevcut* “exist” (10.4%) and *ait* “belong to” (1%). Note that each of these

existential predicates are generally attached with *-Dir* although there are some examples of these predicates without this ending.

There are 99 examples of *var* “exist” in the sample. Of them 85 are used with *-Dir*. The remaining forms of the predicate *var* “exist” are as follows: *var* (6/99), *varken* (6/99), *varsa* (1/99) and *var olduğunu* (1/99). Therefore, the combination *var+Dir* can be described as the default morphological form of this predicate in official discourse. There are only eight instances of this predicate used in subordinated clauses in the forms of *varsa*, *varken* and *var olduğunu*. Of them *varsa* and *varken* are found in adverbial clauses and the latter one, *var olduğunu*, is identified in a complement clause. Related examples are given as follows to illustrate each of these forms of the predicate *var* “exist”.

- (11) a. Devlet millet için *vardır*. (45th Government)  
“State exists for the nation.”  
b. Görüldüğü gibi Türkiye’nin önünde zorluklar, sıkıntılar *var*. (51th Government)  
“As it is seen there are difficulties and challenges in front of Turkey.”  
c. Ailede çalışabilecek durumda ama çalışmayan kişiler *varsa*, işgücü piyasasına yönlendirilecektir. (60th Government)  
“If there are people who can work in the family but do not work, they will be directed to the labor market.”  
d. Hükümetimiz Türkiye’de eğitimle ilgili olarak çeşitli meselelerin *var olduğuna* inanmaktadır. (31st Government)  
“Our Government believe that there are a variety of issues related to education in Turkey.”

The default form of *var*, namely *var+Dir*, which is exemplified in (11a) suggests that *-Dir* is used to reinforce the certainty of the proposition expressed in the sentence. Because *-Dir* is an operator on the modality scale shifting between certain and uncertain (Sansa Tura 1986b:145). In formal language it may not be expected to observe the use of bare *var* “exist”, but as can be seen in (11b) it is also used albeit not commonly. Examples (11c) and (11d) are the indications of sentence complexity in official language. Such existential sentences are nested in complex sentence structures whenever it is possible. Such a complexity reflects the richness of the informative content of the texts investigated in the study. In short, such a informative richness is also created through existential sentences constructed through the predicate *var* “exist”.

Table 1 indicates that the number of negated existential predicate *yok* “not exist” is 41. This predicate is also mostly used with *-Dir* (36/41). The remaining five instances of *yok* “not exist” appear to be either a combination of bare *yok* “not exist” with *ki* (2/41) or a combination of *yok+Dir* with *ki* (3/41). Therefore, the default form of the predicate *yok* “not exist” in official discourse is *yok+Dir*. The use of *yok+Dir* with *ki* occurs in complement clauses. Following examples show three ways of the use of this predicate in the government programs analysed:

- (12) a. Koruyucu tababetin Devlete teveccüh eden büyük bir vazife olduğuna şüphe *yoktur*. (20th Government)  
“There is no doubt that protective medicine is a great duty of the State. “  
b. En büyük meselemiz hiç şüphe *yok ki* iktisadi kalkınma davasıdır. (28th Government)  
“There is no doubt that our greatest concern is the issue of economic development.”  
c. Şüphe *yoktur ki* zirai investisyonlar neticelerini diğer mevzuatlara nazaran çok kısa zamanda verecektir. (22nd Government)  
“There is no doubt that agricultural investments will yield the results in a very short time compared to other fields.”

Example (12) indicates that the predicate *yok* “not exist” does not simply refer to the absence of something. Instead, it indirectly produces positive meaning. In other words, instead of stating the absence of something the negative existential predicate *yok* “not exist” is used to emphasize the text producers’ assertiveness about the proposition involved. As stated for the predicate *var* “exist” the unmarked form of the predicate *yok* “not exist” is *yok+Dir* in the government programs. Here again *-Dir* intensifies the certainty of the proposition expressed in the sentences. Another point that should be noted is the complex sentence structures which are exemplified in (12). Each of these examples is a complex sentence in the

form of complement clauses. It clearly reveals the richness of the texts analysed in terms of information load. In this regard existential sentences constructed via the predicate *yok* “not exist” are also among the choices that a text producer tends to employ in official discourse.

Table 1 shows that the number of the sentences involving the predicate *sahip* “have” as an existential predicate is 30 in the sample. As stated earlier it is possible to describe *sahip* “have” as a predicate of possession. Like other two predicates given above it is mostly used with *-Dir* (24/30). It is also employed with a person ending with the form of *sahip+IPL* (4/30). In addition, this predicate is found in a concessive adverbial clauses preceding the word *olsa* (1/30). There is one instance of its negated form, namely *sahip değildir* “not have”, in the government programs analysed. Examples of each form of the predicate *sahip* “have” are illustrated as follows:

- (13) a. Türkiye derin bir kültür ve tarih birikimine *sahiptir*. (49th Government)  
“Turkey has a deep accumulation of culture and history.”  
b. ... bizler bu onurlu savaş sonunda özgürleştirilen vatanımızın asli *sahipleriyiz*. (64th Government)  
“... we are the principal owners of our homeland that was liberated at the end of this honorable war.”  
c. Vatandaşlarımız, farklı görüşlere de *sahip olsalar*, dost ve kardeş olarak bir arada bulunmanın huzurunu yaşamaktadırlar. (47th Government)  
“Our citizens, even if they have different opinions, are in peace of being together as friends and brothers.”  
d. İşte bu ve benzer nedenlerdir ki, dünyada hiçbir ülke, kapalı bir ekonomik anlayışla, kendi insanının refah düzeyini arzu edilen seviyeye ulaştırma imkânına *sahip değildir*. (48th Government)  
“For this and similar reasons, no country in the world has an opportunity to reach the desired level of welfare for its people adopting a closed economic understanding.”

Example (13) illustrates that the predicate *sahip* “have” is also attached with *-Dir* in the government programs. In addition, the sentences produced with *sahip* “have” are also complex sentences like those realized through the other existential predicates. However, unlike *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” the predicate *sahip* “have” seems to occur mostly in the main clauses instead of occurring in the embedded sentences. Another striking property of the predicate *sahip* “have” is its use with the first person plural verbal ending in four instances. Given the fact that the predicate *sahip* “have” is a nominal predicate it is negated through *değil* “not” that is observed in one instance in the government programs.

As can be seen in Table 1 in the sample 20 instances of the predicate *mevcut* “exist” are found which function as an existential predicate. In fact, this predicate is a lexical counterpart of the other existential predicate *var* “exist”. Therefore, both can be described as the predicates of existence. Their similarity will be much clearer in the discussion of the existential sentence types. Similar to the other existential predicates *mevcut* “exist” is also often used with *-Dir*. Of 20 instances 15 are attached with *-Dir* which raises the certainty of the propositions. The other forms of *mevcut* “exist” in the sample are as follows: *mevcut iken* (2/20), *mevcut değildir* “not exist” (2/20) and *mevcut+DI* (1/20). Of them the first form, namely *mevcut iken*, occurs in an adverbial clause. Like the negated form of the predicate *sahip* “have” this predicate is negated with *değil* “not”. Examples of the use of *mevcut* “exist” in the texts analysed are illustrated as follows:

- (14) a. Maden rezervi bakımından geniş imkanlarımız *mevcuttur*. (30th Government)  
“We have wide opportunities in terms of mineral reserves.”  
b. 2003 yılı öncesinde yalnızca 9 ilimizin doğalgaza erişimi *mevcut iken*, 2013 yılı itibarıyla bunu 72 ile çıkardık. (60th government)  
“While only 9 provinces had access to natural gas before 2003, we increased it to 72 as of 2013.”  
c. ... zorlayan hiç bir sebep *mevcut değildir*. (21st Government)  
“There are no compelling reasons ...”  
d. % 10 seçim barajı 1983 seçimlerinde de aynen *mevcuttü*. (46th Government)  
“A general barrage of 10% also existed in the 1983 elections.”



As stated earlier *mevcut* “exist” is mostly used with *-Dir* and therefore, its unmarked form is *mevcut+Dir* in official documents. This ending is used to reinforce the certainty of the proposition contained in the sentences. Sentences above also show that *mevcut* “exist” may be either a main predicate or an embedded predicate. In the latter constructions the predicate *mevcut* “exist” is mostly observed in adverbial clauses. Similar to *sahip* “have” the predicate *mevcut* “exist” is negated through *değil* “not”. One instance of this predicate is found to be attached with past tense ending *-DI*.

The last existential predicate identified in the sample is *ait* “belong” which is another predicate of possession. Only two instances of this predicate are found with an existential reading in the sample, and both are attached with *-Dir*. The use of this predicate in the texts analysed is exemplified as follows:

- (15) Yetki sadece Yüce Meclise *aittir*. (38th government)  
 “The authority rests only with the Supreme Assembly.”

As can be seen in (15) the predicate *ait* “belong to” is also attached with *-Dir* like other existential predicates. Through this ending the proposition is made much more certain. However, any example of existential sentences containing this predicate is not found in embedded constructions in the sample. Given that just two instances are identified in the government programs it could be argued that this predicate is not as productive as others in the official texts to realize existential constructions.

Following this structural analysis focusing on the existential predicates the next section provides an analysis of 192 existential constructions in terms of types of these sentences taking into consideration their structural properties based on the existential predicates employed in each type.

### ***Findings on Existential Sentence Types and the Existential Predicates Used***

As stated earlier there are four types of existential sentences: possessive existentials, locative existentials, modal existentials and bare or concealed existentials. In the sample all these four types of existential sentences are found. These existential sentence types indicate the textual goals which are achieved through these constructions. The distribution of four types of existential sentences is given below:

Table 2. Types of existential sentences in the government programs (n=192)

Existential sentence types	Frequency	Percentage
Possessive Existentials	79	41.1%
Locative Existentials	48	25%
Modal existentials	47	24.4%
Bare existentials	18	9.3%

Table 2 clearly indicates that all four types of existentials sentences are employed in the sample. Note that any other type of existential sentences was not noticed in the texts analysed. Possessive type of existentials is found to be the most frequent category (41.1%). Locative and modal existential sentences have nearly the same frequency in the sample (25% and 24.4%, respectively). Bare existential constructions are found to have the rate of 9.3%.

Possessive existentials, as the term implies, refer to the possession of some entity. In the government programs analysed it is identified that such existentials are used positively in most cases emphasizing the possession of something valuable by the state or by the government.

As can be seen in Table 2 the number of possessive existentials is 79 in the sample. Possessive type of existential constructions are found to be produced by all five types of the existential predicates. Example (16) below presents the possessive existential constructions identified in the government programs:

- (16) a. Bu hükümetin siyasi misyon olarak üstlendiği beş öncelikli konu vardır. (51st Government)  
 “This government has five priority issues that it undertakes as a political mission.”  
 b. Türkiye’nin çözülemeyecek hiçbir meselesi de yoktur. (60th government)  
 “There is also no issue that cannot be solved in Turkey.”

- c. Üniversiteler ilim hürriyetine ve akademik teminata sahiptir. (27th Government)  
 “Universities have the freedom of knowledge and academic guarantee.”
- d. Ortadoğu ülkeleri ile çok kuvvetli tarihi ve kültürel bağlarımız mevcuttur. (38th Government)  
 “We have strong historical and cultural ties with Middle Eastern countries.”
- e. Bugün için, menkul kıymet stoklarının yüzde 77’den fazlası, menkul kıymet ihraçlarının yüzde 89’u kamu sektörüne aittir. (49th Government)  
 “Today, more than 77 percent of securities stocks and 89 percent of securities issues belong to the public sector.”

Example (16) indicates that all five predicates, namely *var* “exist”, *yok* “not exist”, *sahip* “have”, *mevcut* “exist” and *ait* “belong to”, are used to express the possession in the government programs. In these examples as well as in other instances of possessive existentials the subjects or possessors are mostly collective nouns such as *hükümet* “government”, *üniversiteler* “universities” and *ülkeler* “countries”. However, the objects of these existentials are usually abstract entites including *haklar* “rights”, *kültürel bağlar* “cultural ties” and *ilişkiler* “relations”. Such sentences simply serve in the government programs to indicate who is the possessor and what the possessor have. Therefore, the receivers of the texts are informed through possessive existentials about, for instance, what the state or a specific public institution has at present.

In regard to the sentence structure of the possessive existentials it is seen that those exemplified in (16a) and (16b) of which the predicates are *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” contain a subject marked with the genitive ending *-nIn*, an existential object and the existential predicates. In fact, this structure is the default sentence structure for Turkish possessive existentials in which subjects are marked with genitive ending *-nIn* and objects agree with the subject (Göksel & Kerslake 2005). The possessive existential sentence in (16d) which is produced through the predicate *mevcut* “exist” has also a similar structure. However, it does not include a subject or it is a pro-drop version. The other constituents of this sentence are similar to those in (16a) and (16b). It is not an unexpected result in that all of these predicates are those of existence.

Based on the example in (16c) it can be stated that those possessive existential constructions produced through the predicate *sahip* “have” do not have any subject marked with the genitive ending *-nIn*. Instead, the subjects in such constructions are nominative case marked which is not visible like in copular Turkish sentences. As it is seen in (16e) those possessive existentials constructed with the predicate *ait* “belong to” have also a subject marked with invisible nominative case and an object which is attached dative case ending *-(y)A*. Therefore, those possessive constructions produced with the predicates of possession such as *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to” have the same sentence structure which is different from those realized via the predicates of existence.

In short, Turkish possessive existential constructions have two main structural patterns. The first one is the default form which is constructed through the existential predicates *var* “exist”, *yok* “not exist” and *mevcut* “exist” which are the predicates of existence. The second one includes a subject marked with nominative case and an object, and is constructed through the predicates *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to”. In other words, possessive existentials constructed through the predicates of existence or *var* “exist”, *yok* “not exist” and *mevcut* “exist” have different structural properties in contrast those produced with the predicates of possession, namely *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to”.

Table 2 indicates that the number of locative existential construction is 48 in the sample. Locative type of existentials are constructions which introduce or reintroduce a referent into discourse together with its location. This referent is the new information or discourse-new information. Therefore, in government programs whenever a referent in a certain location is the (discourse)-new information and should be mentioned, locative existentials are one of the options. Such existential constructions in the sample are found to be expressed by three existential predicates, namely *var* “exist”, *yok* “not exist” and *mevcut* “exist”, which are all the predicates of existence. Locative type of existentials found in the sample is illustrated as follows:

- (17) a. Türkiye’de ileri Batı memleketlerinde mevcut olan hak ve hürriyetlerin hepsi vardır. (43rd Government)  
“In Turkey there are all of the rights and freedoms which exist in the advanced Western countries.”
- b. Ülkeler arasında kıyasıya bir rekabetin yaşandığı dünyamızda kaybedecek bir tek günümüz yoktur. (61st Government)  
“There is no single day to lose in the world where there is an intense competition between countries.”
- c. Yurdun bir çok bölgelerinde hayat ve yaşayış tarzı bakımından büyük farklılıklar mevcuttur. (26th Government)  
“There are large differences in terms of life and living styles in many parts of the country.”

Example (17) suggests that locative existential sentences have the same structural patterns although the existential predicates are different. In each of these instances there is a locative phrase or coda, such as *Türkiye’de* “in Turkey”, *dünyamızda* “in our world” and *yurdun pek çok bölgelerinde* “in many parts of the country”. These locative phrases or codas involve concrete noun phrases which is a tendency in the texts analysed. It is also observed that there are also some abstract and textual locative phrases such as *bu çerçevede* “in this regard”. However, the latter type is not common in the government programs.

Concerning the structural properties of locative existentials the most striking point is the fact that only three predicates, namely *var* “exist”, *yok* “not exist” and *mevcut* “exist”, are allowed in these constructions. Therefore, the predicate *mevcut* “exist” has the same structure like other two predicates, namely *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist”, in locative existential constructions. In short, only the predicates of existence produce locative existential sentences in Turkish, and the predicates of possessions such as *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to” do not have any capacity to produce such sentences.

As mentioned above modal existential sentences involve a deontic or an epistemic lexical modal, and perform the function of expressing several types of modality. For instance, deontic modality is a way for the text producer to intervene the speech events by laying obligations or giving permission (Downing & Locke 1992: 382). Therefore, there is a match between the functions of government programs and of deontic modality. In short, a government program which introduces the policy plans of the governments should indicate the obligations of institutions, politicians and citizens and should emphasize which actions are allowed in the process of state functioning. The other type of modality, namely epistemic modality, is a subjective form of modality and therefore, expresses subjective judgements of the text producers in relation to the propositions.

Table 2 shows that the number of modal existential constructions in the sample is 47. Modal existentials are found to be produced only by two of the existential predicates, namely *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist”, in the government programs analysed. It is a distinctive feature of such existential constructions in that the other types of existential sentences admit the remaining predicates. Examples of modal existential sentences are given as follows:

- (18) a. İnsanların ekmek kadar kendilerini gerçekleştirecek özgürlüğe de ihtiyaçları vardır. (58th Government)  
“People need freedom to realize themselves as much as bread.”
- b. Dış siyasetimizden bahsederken milletimizin üzerine büyük bir hassasiyetle durmakta olduğu Kıbrıs meselesinden bahsetmemeye imkan yoktur. (22nd Government)  
“When talking about our foreign policy, it is possible not to mention the Cyprus issue on which our nation dwells on with a great sensitivity.”

Example (18) shows the use of modal existential constructions in the sample. As stated above this type of existential constructions is realized with either *var* “exist” or *yok* “not exist”. Although *mevcut* “exist” is another predicate of existence, it is not found to produce modal existential constructions in the government programs analysed. This point can be given as one of the differences between these predicates. It should also be noted that the predicates of possession, namely *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to”, are not used in modal existential sentences.

It is found that of 47 modal existentials 20 are produced through the predicate *var* “exist”. The lexical modals used with the predicate *var* “exist” in the sample are as follows: *ihtiyaç* “need” (15/20), *zaruret* “necessity” (3/20), *zorunluluk* “obligation” (1/20) and *gereksinim* “necessity” (1/20). All of these lexical modals are part of deontic modality which expresses necessity and obligation. Therefore, the presence of these modality meanings are emphasized through the predicate *var* “exist” and intensified with the use of *-Dir*.

Remaining 27 instances of modal existential sentences are found to be produced through the predicate *yok* “not exist” in the sample. The lexical modals identified in such modal existential sentences are as follows: *şüphesiz* “doubt” (12/27), *imkan* “possibility” (10/27), *olanak* “possibility” (3/27), *kuşku* “doubt” (1/27) and *lüzum* “necessity” (1/27). In short, the predicate *yok* “not exist” is used in the modal existential sentences which express both epistemic modality and deontic modality. However, it is seen that the former is much more frequent than the latter. Because there is only one deontic lexical modal which is used with the predicate *yok* “not exist”, namely *lüzum* “necessity”. It seems that there is a clear cut functional division between *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” in regard to the realization of epistemic and deontic existential sentences. The latter is expressed through the predicate *var* “exist” whereas the former by the predicate *yok* “not exist”.

Major discourse function of modal existentials is to set certain conditions emphasizing the boundaries of obligations and permission and to make the propositions much more assertive through deontic lexical modals. Therefore, such existentials in official discourse appear to be the reflections of text producers’ strong views on the topics under discussion. Note that this is reinforced by the existential predicate *var* “exist” which is marked with *-Dir*. Because all instances of modal existentials are produced with the *var+Dir* form. Epistemic lexical modals in existential constructions, on the other hand, are mainly used to express the text producers’ subjective judgements concerning the propositions involved in the sentences. Concerning the structure of these sentences it should be noted that the sentences have a subject which is marked with genitive ending *-In*. It is a requirement that the predicates *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” impose on the subjects which also appear in possessive type of existential constructions. In this sense modal existential constructions can be considered to be a subcategory of possessive existentials due to such structural similarities.

The last type of existential sentences is bare existentials. Table 2 indicates that there are 18 instances of bare existentials in the government programs analysed. As indicated earlier bare existentials do not include coda and have no specific locative, possessive or deontic meaning. Instead, these sentences simply state the existence of something without limiting it through location or possession. In addition, through bare existential sentences something is just described.

Such constructions in the sample are found to be produced by three existential predicates: *mevcut* “exist”, *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist”. It is not an unexpected result in that the other existential predicates, *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to”, are not eligible to express bare existentials due to their primary meaning of possession which is not consistent with semantic status of such constructions. In short, like modal existential sentences bare existential constructions are produced through the predicates of existence. Bare existentials found in the sample are exemplified as follows:

- (19) a. Devlet millete hizmet etmek için vardır. (62nd Government)  
 “The state exists to serve the nation.”  
 b. Bu beraberlik ve birliğin zedelenmesinin kesinlikle kimseye yararı yoktur. (49th Government)  
 “There is no benefit of damaging this unity and harmony for anyone.”  
 c. Düzensiz göç krizinden, terörist saldırılarına kadar geniş bir yelpazeye yayılan sınamalar ve seçenekleri mevcuttur. (65th Government)  
 “There are a wide range of tryouts and their options available from irregular migration crisis to terrorist attacks.”

Example (19) indicates that these sentences just express the presence of something without giving a specific location and describe some entity. In regard to their structural properties bare existential constructions are found to contain either a subject marked with an invisible nominative case as in (19a)

and (19c) or a subject which is marked with genitive ending *-nIn* as in (19b). In short, bare existential constructions seem to have two options for the subjects. Unlike other types of existential sentences, bare existentials are found to be mostly simple sentences. In addition, they are less used in embedded sentences.

The analysis presented above suggests that the structural properties of existential construction types are much more varied than those given in descriptive studies. Possessive existential sentences are the most flexible one in that they can be produced with all five existential predicates. Based on the predicate groups these sentences appear to contain distinct structural properties.

Table 3 below summarizes the use of the existential predicates in four different types of existential sentences in the sample:

Table 3. Distribution of the existential predicates based on the existential sentence types in the government programs

Existential sentence types	<i>var</i> “exist”	<i>yok</i> “not exist”	<i>mevcut</i> “exist”	<i>sahip</i> “have”	<i>ait</i> “belong to”
Possessives (n= 79)	37	2	8	30	2
Locatives (n=48)	37	5	6	0	0
Modal Existentials (n=47)	20	27	0	0	0
Bare existentials (n=18)	5	7	6	0	0

Table 3 presents the distribution of the existential predicates identified in the sample based on the existential sentence types. It is seen that among the existential predicates those of existence, namely *var* “exist”, *yok* “not exist” and *mevcut* “exist”, appear to be more productive. Because they occur in more types of existential constructions. For instance, *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” appear in all four types, and *mevcut* “exist” occurs in three of the four types of these sentences. Note that the predicate *mevcut* “exist” is not used only in modal existential constructions. The predicates of possession, on the other hand, are limited to possessive existentials. In other words, both *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to” occur only in possessive type of the existential constructions which are consistent with the semantic structure of these predicates.

Therefore, it can be argued that existential meanings in Turkish are mostly expressed through the predicates *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist” in official discourse.

## Conclusion

This study examines the existential sentences in the government programs which are part of the official language of Turkish. It is found that in Turkish existential constructions can be produced using other predicates in addition to the default existential predicates *var* “exist” and *yok* “not exist”. These marked existential predicates include *mevcut* “exist”, *sahip* “have” and *ait* “belong to” which are all nominal verbs. However, the majority of the existentials are found to be produced through the predicate *var* “exist”. Its default form in official discourse appears to be *var+Dir*. In fact, all of the existential predicates mentioned above are mostly attached with *-Dir* in the sample. Given that the ending *-Dir* reinforces the certainty of the proposition it is used to make propositions much more reliable in official texts.

Four types of existential sentences are identified in the government programs analysed: possessives, locatives, modal existentials and bare existentials. Each type of existential constructions has its own structural properties and distinctive features. At the same time these constructions have certain textual functions. For instance, possessives which are the most frequent type of these sentences emphasize the possessor who is mostly the state in the sample. Locative existential constructions express the presence of something giving its specific location. Modal existentials, on the other hand, are part of the modality functions of the texts indicating either obligations or subjective judgements of the text producers regarding the propositions contained in the sentences. Bare existentials which are used to describe something in a plain way seem to be less used in the sample.

Future studies may provide much more comprehensive information about existential sentences in Turkish in terms of structural properties and textual functions of these constructions. It should be noted that the findings presented in the study are limited to official texts. Therefore, different text types should be analysed whether or not other predicates are also employed in Turkish existentials.

## Abbreviations

In the study the Leipzig Glossing Rules are employed. Related abbreviations used in the study are as follows: 1 PL= first person plural, GEN=genitive, LOC=locative, NOM= nominative, POSS= possessive.

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