



Towards A Cross-Cultural Communicative Profile Of Directiveness: The Case Of Turkish And German Cartoons

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Abstract

This study investigates how directiveness is linguistically and culturally constructed in Turkish and German child-directed animated series. Drawing on speech act theory and intercultural pragmatics, the analysis focuses on directive speech acts as socially embedded practices through which authority, obligation, and interpersonal relations are negotiated. Using qualitative discourse analysis, directive instances were identified and categorized according to their degree of directness and their lexical and pragmatic realizations. The findings reveal systematic cross-cultural differences. German cartoons predominantly employ direct strategies, such as bare imperatives and explicit obligation markers, framing authority as rule-based, explicit, and pedagogically legitimized. In contrast, Turkish cartoons favor conventionally indirect and mitigated forms, including optionality markers, inclusive constructions, and affiliative address terms, positioning authority as relationally negotiated and cooperation oriented. These patterns suggest that animated media function as culturally mediated environments of language socialization, modelling distinct norms of directive communication for child audiences. By shifting attention from adult institutional settings to child-directed media discourse, the study contributes to research on intercultural pragmatics, language socialization, and media discourse, highlighting the pedagogical implications of directive practices for children's early learning and socialization.

Keywords: Directiveness; Intercultural Pragmatics; Language Socialization; Animated Media Discourse; Turkish And German Cartoons.

1. Introduction

Language plays an important role in shaping social interaction, serving not only as a tool for communication but also as a means of regulating social relations, authority, and interpersonal behavior. One key dimension of interactional language use is directiveness, which is realized through directive speech acts, a category that encompasses commands, requests, and invitations (Searle, 1975). As noted in the literature, such utterances represent attempts on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to perform some kind of action or cessation of action (Ellis, 1992). However, the forms these directives take and the meanings they convey are not universal; rather, they are deeply embedded in culturally shared norms and interactional expectations.

Research in intercultural pragmatics has shown that directiveness is not a value-neutral phenomenon. Instead, it reflects culturally specific assumptions about hierarchy, responsibility, politeness, and social cooperation (Fitch et al., 1994a, as cited in Wierzbicka, 1990). Consequently, what is considered clear and appropriate in one cultural context may be interpreted as rude or authoritarian in another, while utterances intended as polite may, in contrast, be perceived as excessively indirect. This challenges the widespread assumption that indirectness is inherently the preferred or more polite strategy, as directness can be socially expected and positively evaluated in certain cultures (Girolametto, 1995). Ultimately, these differences are shaped by shared cultural models of interaction, which influence how speakers position themselves and others within social encounters. Importantly, directiveness is encoded not only

through grammatical forms such as imperatives or modal verbs, but also through lexical choices, discourse markers, and broader pragmatic work. As noted in pragmatic research, discourse and pragmatic markers are fundamental in communication and interaction and play a key role in performing speech actions, while pragmatic work including mitigation, framing, and politeness modulates directive force depending on the interactional context (Lopez Villegas, 2019).

Words expressing obligation, necessity, mitigation, or justification function as carriers of cultural meaning, signaling how authority and agency are negotiated in interaction. Therefore, investigating directiveness requires attention to both linguistic form and the cultural models that give those forms social value. The study of directiveness must integrate structural, lexical, and cultural perspectives to fully explain how directive force is constructed and interpreted across communicative encounters.

Within this perspective, social interaction can be understood as a space where language and culture intersect, and where culturally grounded norms of directiveness are enacted and reinforced. Examining how directiveness operates across different languages therefore provides valuable insights into broader patterns of communication, social organization, and cultural values. One key mechanism of this cultural enactment is the media, which serves as a developmental environment for children. As Kampf and Hamo (2015) emphasize, media and television, as major carriers of popular culture, play a central role in both social and developmental facets of children's worlds and are especially influential in the transmission of social norms and interactional expectations.

Beyond entertainment, cartoons function as recurring interactional scripts of everyday life, repeatedly staging situations in which characters instruct, warn, correct, request, negotiate, or impose rules. Because these exchanges are simplified, highly contextualized, and often repeated across episodes, cartoons become a particularly powerful form of norm-setting discourse. They provide children with accessible models of how to address others, respond to authority, and manage social relationships through language. This aligns with evidence that television supports the process of jointly constructing mutual social worlds and negotiating social relationships (Kampf & Hamo, 2015).

From this perspective, animated series can be approached as culturally mediated discourse that reflects and reproduces locally valued interactional styles. They provide a useful window into culturally accepted patterns of directiveness by showing the ways speakers guide and influence others' actions. What counts as an appropriate directive (e.g., a direct command vs. a mitigated request, or an explicit correction vs. an indirect hint) is shaped by cultural assumptions about politeness, hierarchy, responsibility, and cooperation. In other words, cartoons do not simply mirror interaction; they actively participate in teaching children what sounds normal, sounds polite, or sounds authoritative within their linguistic and cultural environment. This claim is consistent with findings by Yüzügüldü, Kavak, and Sarial (2025), whose content analysis of *Pepee*, *Caillou*, *Heidi*, and *Masha and the Bear* shows that cartoons function as socialization tools that transmit culturally grounded norms of interaction and directive expectations while also promoting universal developmental values.

1.1. Literature review

Despite a growing body of research on directiveness and directive speech acts, existing studies have predominantly focused on adult institutional discourse, including classroom, workplace, or formal service-encounter communication. For example, Dalton-Puffer (2005) shows that directives are realized in naturalistic classroom interaction in adult instructional settings, while Sulistyani (2018) demonstrates that teacher directives serve institutional control and task-management functions in EFL classrooms, and Vine (2009) proves that workplace directives are embedded in hierarchical, role-based adult communication.

Research on service encounters follows the same trend. Félix-Brasdefer (2015) demonstrates that directive force and mitigation strategies are primarily examined in formal adult transactional contexts, such as hotel or service-counter interactions. As a result, child-directed media, particularly animated series, have received comparatively limited scholarly attention as environments in which culturally valued directive practices are modeled and normalized. Mashudi et al. (2020) similarly found that cartoons employ both direct and indirect politeness strategies as culturally meaningful communication tools, although indirectness is often preferred at the narrative storytelling level. Complementing this, Girolametto and Weitzman (1995, 2000) showed that adult directiveness toward children can be

adaptive when used to manage attention and joint action, whereas excessive redirective lexical forms may limit children's cognitive participation and linguistic development.

Moreover, while previous work has examined directive strategies at the level of grammatical form and speech-act classification, lexical directiveness that is, the role of specific lexical choices in conveying authority, obligation, mitigation, and interpersonal stance remains underexplored as a culturally meaningful pragmatic practice. In addition, contrastive research has rarely considered Turkish and German cartoons as discourse spaces of cultural socialization, despite their strong potential for revealing differences in how authority and social relations are linguistically constructed for young audiences. For instance, Nickl (2020) analyzed German cartoons as spaces of cultural critique, demonstrating that comedic framing and lexical-pragmatic tropes can reproduce societal anxieties and construct representations of the "Muslim Other" in German public discourse. Furthermore, Karakaya (2010) found that German cartoons exhibit stronger picture-text complementarity and redundancy, whereas Turkish cartoons display greater picture-text dependence. His findings also indicate that Turkish cartoon discourse uses figurative language more frequently and relies on interjections to differentiate meaning and enhance pragmatic function.

However, no existing contrastive study directly examines Turkish and German children's animated series at the level of lexical directiveness and culturally modeled directive norms. This confirms that child-directed animated media remain understudied, even though they offer valuable insights into culturally specific constructions of authority and interaction.

1.2. Research questions

Against this background, the purpose of the present study is to explore how directiveness is linguistically and culturally constructed in Turkish and German animated series. By focusing on directive practices in child-directed media, this study aims to contribute to research on intercultural pragmatics, language socialization, and media discourse by demonstrating how culturally embedded norms of authority, responsibility, and social interaction are represented and made accessible to child audiences. Accordingly, this study addresses the following three research questions:

- (a) How is directiveness discursively constructed in Turkish and German cartoons?
- (b) What lexical and pragmatic resources are employed to realize directive acts in each language?
- (c) To what extent do Turkish and German cartoons differ in their underlying cultural assumptions about authority, obligation, and social norms?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Directiveness and speech act theory

Speech act theory is a core concept within pragmatics, originally developed by Austin (1962) and further elaborated by Searle (1975, 1976). The term "speech acts is used to describe actions such as requesting, commanding, questioning, or informing" (Yule, 2014, p. 131). As noted by Yule (1996), utterances do not merely convey information; they also perform social actions shaped by contextual and cultural factors. Understanding speech acts therefore helps capture the implicit meanings and pragmatic functions of language in specific interactional settings.

The literature on speech act theory is extensive, incorporating approaches that define speech acts through conventions, speaker intentions, and contextual conditions. The present study does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of speech act theory. Instead, it focuses on directive speech acts, also referred to as directiveness, as a key dimension of interactional language use. This focus enables a more detailed investigation of how speakers linguistically guide, influence, and regulate others' actions within culturally embedded communicative contexts.

Table 1. Levels of Directiveness in Directive Speech Acts (Adapted from Blum-Kulka et al., 1989)

Level of Directiveness	Definition	Typical Linguistic Realizations	Pragmatic Interpretation
Direct	The directive force is explicitly encoded in the linguistic form	Imperatives: obligation statements (<i>must, have to</i>)	High speaker entitlement; strong authority

Level of Directiveness	Definition	Typical Linguistic Realizations	Pragmatic Interpretation
Conventionally indirect	The directive is realized through conventionalized forms	Modal questions (<i>Can you...?</i>); polite requests	Reduced imposition; norm-governed politeness
Non-conventionally indirect	The directive force is inferred from context	Hints; statements of need/problem	High indirectness; shared inference

Note. This classification follows Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) distinction between direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect request strategies, extended here to directive speech acts more broadly.

Table 1 presents the analytical framework used in this study to identify and categorize directive speech acts based on their communicative function. Blum-Kulka (1989) outlines three main request-formulation strategies: direct, conventionally indirect, and unconventionally indirect. These broad categories subsume multiple sub-strategies, including mood-derived forms, explicit or mitigated performatives, expressions of obligation or desire, suggestion-based formulations, preparatory questions, and different types of hints, varying in strength from strong to mild.

Drawing on classical speech act theory and pragmatics, Searle (1979) argues that directive speech acts function as attempts by speakers to get hearers to perform future actions, and that such acts may also carry the potential to constrain an interlocutor's autonomy depending on how directive force is linguistically encoded and pragmatically modulated. Each category in Table 1 is operationalized through its interactional purpose, common linguistic realizations, and pragmatic force, linking formal lexical-grammatical features to their social and interactional meanings.

The purpose of this classification is not to reproduce a taxonomy of speech acts, but rather to offer a functional analysis of child-directed discourse in animated media. In line with the focus of the present study, particular attention is paid to how directive acts encode authority, obligation, cooperation, and interpersonal alignment across interactional contexts.

To capture variation in directness and indirectness, directive acts identified through Table 1 are further analysed in terms of their degree of directiveness, following established distinctions in cross-cultural pragmatics. This study explores how directiveness is not only a matter of structural form, but also a process of culturally grounded meaning-making, frequently realized through lexical and pragmatic choices.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in discourse analysis, intercultural pragmatics, and speech act theory. The analysis focuses on directive speech acts in animated media dialogues, examining how characters attempt to guide, instruct, or regulate others' actions. Directive instances are categorized into clearly defined sociopragmatic groups based on their function and degree of directness. This design was selected to (a) maintain theoretical consistency with established models of directive formulation, (b) ensure structural comparability between Turkish and German media data, and (c) enable the analysis of directiveness without presupposing evaluative or value-based interpretations.

3.2. Data

The data consist of spoken dialogue extracted from Turkish and German animated series addressed to children. Animated media was selected as the object of analysis because it provides repeated, stylized, and culturally salient representations of everyday interaction, particularly in contexts involving instruction, correction, guidance, and rule enforcement. These characteristics make cartoons a productive site for examining directive practices as part of child-directed discourse and language socialization. The German data were drawn from the animated series *Willi Willi Nicht Ruhig*, while the Turkish data were taken from the animated series *Elif ve Arkadaşları*. Both series are widely recognized within their respective cultural contexts and are explicitly designed for child audiences.

Episodes were selected based on the following criteria:

- (a) the series are explicitly targeted at children,
- (b) they contain frequent dialogic interaction between characters,
- (c) they include both adult–child and peer interactional contexts, and
- (d) they are widely accessible within their respective cultural environments.

The selected episodes are publicly available through official broadcasting platforms and authorized online streaming services in Germany and Turkey, ensuring transparency and replicability of the dataset. Only verbal dialogue was included in the corpus. Non-verbal directives, songs, background narration, and voice-over commentary were excluded from the analysis to maintain analytical consistency across datasets.

3.3. Instrument(s)

The present study relied on a qualitative discourse-analytic coding framework as the primary analytical instrument for data collection and analysis. This framework was developed to systematically identify, classify, and interpret directive speech acts in child-directed animated media discourse.

The analytical instrument is grounded in established models of speech act theory and intercultural pragmatics, particularly the classification of directive strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), which distinguishes between direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect realizations. This model was adapted to the present study in order to capture both grammatical and lexical-pragmatic realizations of directive force in animated dialogue. Table 1 presents the operationalized levels of directiveness used as the analytical instrument.

Using this framework, each directive instance was coded according to (a) directive type (e.g., command, request, instruction, suggestion, warning, prohibition, invitation), (b) level of directiveness (direct, conventionally indirect, non-conventionally indirect), and (c) salient lexical and pragmatic resources (e.g., obligation markers, mitigation devices, inclusive forms, discourse particles, justificatory framing). Coding decisions were guided by the pragmatic function of utterances rather than grammatical form alone, allowing for the inclusion of indirect and context-dependent directives.

The coding framework was refined through iterative engagement with the data. Initial coding was conducted on a subset of episodes to test the applicability and clarity of the categories, after which minor adjustments were made to improve analytical precision before full corpus analysis.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

The data collection process followed a systematic, multi-stage procedure designed to ensure transparency, consistency, and comparability across the Turkish and German datasets. As the study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytic approach, no experimental intervention, participant training, or respondent instruction was required. Instead, data collection focused on the careful selection, transcription, and analytical preparation of child-directed animated media dialogue.

In the first stage, appropriate animated series were identified based on predefined selection criteria: the series had to be explicitly targeted at child audiences, contain frequent dialogic interaction, include both adult–child and peer interactional contexts, and be widely accessible within their respective cultural environments. Based on these criteria, the German animated series *Willi Willi Nicht Ruhig* and the Turkish animated series *Elif ve Arkadaşları* were selected as the primary data sources.

In the second stage, a subset of episodes from each series was selected for analysis. Episodes were chosen to ensure thematic diversity and to include recurrent interactional situations involving instruction, guidance, correction, and rule enforcement.

In the third stage, the selected episodes were transcribed manually, focusing on spoken interaction. Transcriptions prioritized linguistic content relevant to directive speech acts, including lexical markers of obligation, mitigation, and pragmatic framing. Each transcript was reviewed multiple times to ensure accuracy and contextual understanding before analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Directiveness in German cartoons and lexical and pragmatic resources

The qualitative analysis of directive speech acts in the German animated series reveals a strong preference for explicit linguistic directness in child-directed interaction. A large proportion of directives are realized through bare imperatives (e.g., *Komm sofort zurück!*, *Hör auf!*, *Flieg niemals...*), lexical markers of obligation such as *musst* and *darfst nicht*, as well as negative imperatives expressing prohibition as it seen in table 1. These forms make directive force overt, minimizing ambiguity and foregrounding authority linguistically rather than implying it implicitly. The data therefore suggest that directiveness in German child-directed discourse is typically encoded through transparent and explicit linguistic choices.

Importantly, directiveness in the analyzed cartoons does not operate solely as a disciplinary mechanism. Many directives appear within pedagogical and explanatory sequences, including utterances that generalize life principles (*Die Welt hat zwei Seiten* – “The world has two sides” ; see Table 2), provide future-oriented guidance (*Dann erkläre ich dir alles* – “Then I’ll explain everything to you” ; see Table 2), or offer normative justification (*Rom wurde nicht an einem Tag erbaut* – “Rome wasn’t built in a day” ; see Table 2). These patterns indicate that authority is framed not only as control but also as a vehicle for teaching, preparing, and socializing the child character. Directive acts are frequently accompanied by explanations that contextualize rules and expectations, reflecting a guidance model grounded in instruction and rationalization rather than coercion. This suggests that authority, while explicit, is discursively constructed as a tool for structured learning and norm transmission in child-focused media interaction.

Indirect directive strategies are present in the data, but they occupy a secondary position. Indirectness appears predominantly in child-initiated turns, often realized through questions, complaints, or expressions of confusion (e.g., *Why don’t you explain it to me...?* ; see Table 2). These utterances function less as expressions of authority and more as bids for clarification or understanding. In contrast, adult characters rarely rely on indirect strategies when exercising directive force, reinforcing a hierarchical distribution of pragmatic resources.

Although authority in these cartoons is clearly hierarchical, it is not framed as arbitrary. Strong directive forms such as *Du darfst nicht*, *musst*, and *niemals* are frequently supported by justificatory discourse that explains the reasons behind restrictions or obligations. These framing positions authority as legitimate, rule-based, and oriented toward the child’s well-being rather than as unaccountable power.

The data further indicate that German directive communication can be explained through a constellation of culture-specific values that shape pragmatic preferences and models of legitimate authority. A central principle is performance orientation (*Leistungsorientierung*), which prioritizes efficiency, achievement, and measurable outcomes in both institutional and everyday interaction. This value corresponds to high assertiveness and high uncertainty avoidance, dimensions identified by Brodbeck et al. (2002), whose work highlights that German leadership styles display strong task focus, autonomy, and precision but comparatively lower humane orientation. This means that directive force is less likely to be mitigated through emotional or relational appeals. Instead, linguistic directness is frequently interpreted as a marker of clarity, competence, and professionalism rather than impoliteness.

Another key cultural model is *Ordnung* (order, structure), a deeply rooted societal norm that emphasizes rule-governed behavior, predictability, and explicit expectation setting. As Lewis 2006, (as cited in Cramer) describes, “this principle reflects a belief in interactional organization designed to maximize efficiency.” (p.111) Supporting this, Cramer et al. (2015) highlights that *Ordnung* informs interpersonal conduct by favoring structured communication and explicit formulations when expressing obligations or restrictions. Because this cultural model favors clearly articulated boundaries, adult-initiated directive turns often employ lexical forms such as *musst*, *niemals*, and *du darfst nicht* as pragmatically unmarked choices, particularly in hierarchical interactions involving children.

Moreover, while authority is overtly expressed, it is commonly legitimized through rule-based justification (*Regelorientierung* + *Begründungskultur*). Rather than softening directives through indirectness, adult characters tend to validate directive force by providing explanations, consequences, or rule-based reasoning. This pattern frames directive communication as protective and rational rather than coercive.

Taken together, these findings indicate that German child-directed cartoons model a culturally specific socialization environment in which interaction is represented as structured, explicitly regulated, and grounded in explanation. In this discourse space, linguistic directness emerges not as rudeness but as a

pedagogically motivated and culturally normalized feature of interaction, where authority is openly stated and guidance is routinely accompanied by justificatory talk.

Table 2. Directive Speech Acts in a German Animated Series

ID	German Utterance (Original)	English Gloss	Directive Type	Directness Strategy	Contextual / Analytical Notes
G2	Hör auf! Schnell, beeil dich!	Stop! Quickly, hurry!	Command	Direct	Bare imperatives; urgency
G3	Komm raus, Maja!	Come out, Maja!	Command	Direct	Imperative; adult → child
G4	Jetzt beginnt die ernste Seite des Lebens, dafür musst du viel lernen.	Now the serious side of life begins; you have to learn a lot for that.	Instruction	Direct	Obligation expressed declaratively
G5	Du musst zuerst leichtere Dinge lernen.	You have to learn easier things first.	Instruction	Direct	Obligation marker (musst)
G6	Warum erklärst du es mir nicht so, dass ich es wirklich verstehe?	Why don't you explain it to me in a way that I really understand?	Request	Conventionally indirect	Interrogative request; mitigation
G7	Wie soll ich fürs Leben etwas lernen, wenn mir niemand etwas erklärt?	How am I supposed to learn anything for life if no one explains anything to me?	Complaint / Request	Non-conventionally indirect	Directive implied through complaint
G8	Man lernt nicht alles an einem Tag. Auch Cassandra sollte das wissen. Rom wurde nicht an einem Tag erbaut.	You don't learn everything in one day... good things take time, don't they?	Reassurance / Guidance	Conventionally indirect	Normative explanation; mitigated authority
G9	Komm sofort zurück!	Come right back here!	Command	Direct	Strong imperative; control
G10	Maja, hör auf mit dem Unsinn! kannst du mich nicht hören?	Maja, stop with the nonsense! Can't you hear me?	Command / Reprimand	Direct	Imperative + reprimand
G11	Morgen oder spätestens übermorgen fliegst du zum ersten Mal raus... dann erkläre ich dir alles.	Tomorrow or latest the day after you will fly out for the first time... then I will explain everything to you.	Instruction	Conventionally indirect	Future-oriented guidance
G12	Deshalb dürfen kleine Bienen nicht allein rausfliegen, hast du gehört?	That's why little bees are not allowed to fly out alone, did you hear?	Prohibition	Direct	Negative permission; authority
G13	Vieles musst du noch lernen.	There's still a lot you have to learn.	Instruction	Conventionally indirect	Obligation implied
G14	Flieg niemals nahe am Wasser.	Never fly close to water.	Prohibition	Direct	Negative imperative
G15	Die Welt hat wie alles andere, zwei Seiten: eine schöne und eine weniger schöne.	The world has two faces like everything else: a beautiful one and a less beautiful one.	Explanation	Indirect	Didactic framing

ID	German Utterance (Original)	English Gloss	Directive Type	Directness Strategy	Contextual / Analytical Notes
G16	Kind, ich habe dir doch gerade alles erklärt. Bleib jetzt stehen.	Child, I just explained everything to you. Stay now.	Command	Direct	Authority reinforced
G17	Du darfst nicht.	You are not allowed.	Prohibition	Direct	Strong authority

4.2. Directiveness in Turkish cartoons and lexical and pragmatic resources

The qualitative analysis of directive speech acts in the Turkish animated series indicates that adult characters regularly exercise directive force through guidance, instruction, commands, and invitations. However, the linguistic realization of these directives is predominantly indirect rather than overtly imposing. Adult characters consistently employ cooperation-seeking and face-protective mitigators such as *istersen* (“if you like”; see Table 3), *olur mu* (“is that okay?”; see Table 3), *belki* (“maybe”; see Table 3), *bence* (“I think / in my opinion”; see Table 3), and affiliative address forms like *hadi* (“come on / let’s”; see Table 3), *güzel oğlum* (“my sweet boy”; see Table 3), or *minik tırtıllarım* (“my little caterpillars”; see Table 3). These lexical choices frame directives as supportive and collaborative, reducing imposition and negotiating cooperation instead of enforcing compliance.

Although adult-child hierarchy is clearly present, authority is discursively framed as legitimate and socially grounded rather than arbitrary, supported through normative explanations and reason-giving moves. Utterances such as *Gerçek hayatta böyledir... kurallara uymazsak karmaşa olur* (“That’s how real life works... if we don’t follow rules, there will be chaos”) contextualize obligations as protective, educational, and oriented toward collective well-being rather than punishment or coercion. This reflects a culturally embedded orientation toward social order, relational harmony, and shared communicative responsibility.

Child-initiated turns further illustrate the functional distribution of pragmatic strategies. In the corpus, children rarely claim authority, and their indirect directives or complaints (e.g., *Ben yanlış anlamışım, öğretmenim* — “I misunderstood, teacher”; *Bugün ne yapacağız?* — “What are we doing today?”; *Kurallardan biraz sıkıldık* — “We’re a bit tired of rules”) primarily function as bids for clarification, affect-framed expressions of confusion or mild challenge without confrontational intent, and signals of expectation for adult guidance and explanation. These turns reinforce, rather than destabilize, the interactional model in which indirectness indexes stance and alignment, not power negotiation.

Indirect communication patterns in Turkish cultural contexts have also been linked to silence as a communicative act and cultural value associated with dignity, restraint, and wisdom (Metz, 2016). This source contributes cultural interpretation, though it does not provide explicit methodological evidence or empirical analysis.

Consistent with broader linguistic and intercultural research, Uysal et al. (2014) found that Turkish scholars employ higher levels of indirectness and hedging devices compared to other cultural groups, indicating a strong cultural preference for indirect communication. Additionally, Kameh Khosh et al. (2020) confirm that collectivistic, status- and age-oriented Muslim cultures exhibit greater vertical interpersonal distance, while Paşa et al. (2000) and Abdelhady et al. (2025) provide supporting evidence that Turkish communication and leadership styles combine implicit influence tactics with directive force, foregrounding relational sensitivity and cultural norm transmission. Taken together, these findings support the interpretation that, in Turkish animated media discourse, directiveness is interactionally normalized but linguistically mitigated through warmth, optionality, inclusivity, and community-oriented justification, positioning authority as guidance rather than unilateral enforcement.

Table 3 Directive Speech Acts in Turkish Child-Directed Cartoons

ID	Turkish (Original)	English Gloss	Directive Type	Directness Strategy	Contextual / Analytical Notes
T1	<i>İstersen sen de boyama yapabilirsin.</i>	If you like, you can do some coloring too.	Invitation	Conventionally indirect	Optionality; mitigation (<i>istersen</i>)
T2	<i>Biz de annenle biraz konuşalım, olur mu?</i>	Shall we talk a bit with your mother?	Request	Conventionally indirect	Interrogative; consent-oriented

ID	Turkish (Original)	English Gloss	Directive Type	Directness Strategy	Contextual / Analytical Notes
T3	Hadi arkadaşlarına merhaba de, Ayas.	Come on, say hello to your friends, Ayas.	Command	Conventionally indirect	Softener (hadi); affiliative
T4	Harika bir oyun oynuyoruz, bize katılmak istemez misin?	We're playing a great game, wouldn't you like to join us?	Invitation	Conventionally indirect	Positive framing; modal question
T5	Hadi benim güzel oğlum.	Come on, my sweet boy.	Encouragement	Conventionally indirect	Address term; affective mitigation
T6	Hadi bir daire yapalım.	Let's make a circle.	Instruction	Conventionally indirect	Inclusive we
T7	Minik tırtıllarım, bence bu tarafa gelin.	My little caterpillars, I think you should come this way.	Instruction	Conventionally indirect	Mitigator (bence); metaphor
T8	Sorunu bana da anlatmak ister misiniz?	Would you like to explain the problem to me as well?	Request	Conventionally indirect	Politeness; plural address
T9	Belki sizlere yardımcı olurum.	Maybe I can help you.	Offer	Non-conventionally indirect	Suggestive; low imposition
T10	Öğretmenim, biz kurallardan bugün biraz sıkıldık.	Teacher, today we're a bit tired of rules.	Complaint	Non-conventionally indirect	Child-initiated; indirect challenge
T11	Gerçek hayatta böyledir çocuklar, kurallara uymazsak karmaşa olur.	That's how real life is, children; if we don't follow rules, there is chaos.	Explanation	Indirect	Normative justification
T12	Benim arabalı kurabiyemden yiyebilirsin.	You can eat from my car-shaped cookie.	Offer	Conventionally indirect	Permission-giving
T13	Bugün ne yapacağız öğretmenim?	What are we going to do today, teacher?	Request for information	Conventionally indirect	Child-initiated
T14	Kurabiye yaptıktan sonra, eğer isterseniz başka bir tatlı yapabiliriz.	After making cookies, if you want, we can make another dessert.	Suggestion	Conventionally indirect	Conditional; shared decision
T15	Önce malzemelerimizi toplayalım, sonra masaya geçeriz.	First let's gather our materials, then we'll go to the table.	Instruction	Conventionally indirect	Sequencing; inclusive
T16	Ben yanlış anlamışım öğretmenim.	I misunderstood, teacher.	Self-correction	Indirect	Acceptance of authority
T17	Hadi şimdi ellerimizi yıkayıp sınıfa geçelim.	Come on, now let's wash our hands and go to the classroom.	Instruction	Conventionally indirect	Routine directive; hadi

5. Discussion

A comparison of Table 2 and Table 3 reveals systematic differences in how directiveness is linguistically realized and interactionally distributed in German and Turkish child-directed cartoons. In the German data (Table 2), directive speech acts are predominantly realized through direct strategies, including bare imperatives, explicit obligation markers (*musst*), and prohibitions (*du darfst nicht*, *niemals*). These forms make directive force overt and reinforce a hierarchical interactional structure in which authority is clearly encoded in linguistic form. Although explanatory and pedagogical discourse is present, it often accompanies or legitimizes strong directives rather than replacing them. Indirect strategies in the German dataset occur less frequently and are largely associated with child-initiated turns, functioning

as requests for clarification or expressions of dissatisfaction rather than as tools of authority. In contrast, the Turkish data (Table 3) display a strong preference for conventionally indirect and mitigated directive strategies. Directives are commonly softened through optionality markers (*istersen*), discourse particles (*hadi*), modal constructions, and inclusive forms (*yapalım, geçelim*), which frame guidance as shared action rather than unilateral control. Authority in the Turkish dataset is therefore less explicitly asserted and more relationally negotiated.

Notably, indirectness is not restricted to children but is also employed by adult characters, indicating that mitigated directive forms function as a socially accepted norm across speaker roles. Overall, while both datasets include pedagogical explanations and norm-oriented discourse, the German cartoons foreground rule-based authority through explicit directiveness, whereas the Turkish cartoons emphasize participation, affiliation, and cooperation through linguistically softened directive practices.

From a pedagogical perspective, these cross-linguistic differences in directive realization suggest that child-directed cartoons function as implicit models of teaching and learning practices. Because children are socialized into cultural roles through explicit and implicit language use. (Ely & Berko Gleason, 2019). The predominance of explicit directive forms in the German data may contribute to the socialization of children into a rule-oriented learning environment, in which authority is linguistically encoded and compliance is foregrounded as a central expectation. Such interactional patterns resemble teacher-fronted instructional contexts, where directives structure behaviour and learning through clearly delineated obligations

In contrast, the Turkish cartoons appear to model a more facilitative pedagogical stance, in which guidance is enacted through inclusive and mitigated forms that invite participation rather than enforce obedience. By framing directives as shared actions, these practices may encourage children to perceive learning as a collaborative process and to position themselves as active participants rather than passive recipients of instruction.

Taken together, this study highlight the role of child-directed media as a site of pedagogical socialization, where linguistic choices subtly shape children's understanding of authority, cooperation, and acceptable forms of participation in learning contexts.

Table 3. Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Models of Directive Framing in German and Turkish Child-Directed Cartoons

German Model	Turkish Model
Directiveness + directness framed through performance, order, precision, autonomy, and linguistic transparency	Directiveness + indirectness framed through warmth, consent, togetherness, and face-saving
Justification grounded in rule-based rational legitimation	Justification grounded in social order, collective good, and guided participation
Adult speakers rarely use indirect forms	Adult speakers frequently use indirect forms
Low humane orientation in directive framing	High humane orientation in directive framing
Authority linguistically foregrounded rather than relationally negotiated	Authority relationally negotiated rather than linguistically imposed

Note. The categories reflect sociopragmatic tendencies identified through qualitative discourse-analytic coding of lexical and pragmatic realizations of directive speech acts in child-directed media dialogue.

6. Conclusions

The present study confirms that directiveness in child-directed animated media is a culturally situated communicative practice rather than a universal or form-driven phenomenon. The contrastive discourse analysis reveals systematic differences between German and Turkish cartoons in both the linguistic realization and the interactional distribution of directive force. German animated discourse foregrounds authority explicitly, favoring bare imperatives, lexical obligation markers (*musst*), and categorical prohibitions (*du darfst nicht, niemals*), constructing a norm model where directness indexes clarity, rule-governed legitimacy, and socially licensed hierarchy. Indirect directives are present, yet they are largely confined to child-initiated turns and function primarily as clarification-seeking or mild dissatisfaction signals rather than expressions of authority.

In contrast, Turkish cartoons demonstrate that while directive intent is pragmatically normalized, linguistic directness is systematically mitigated across speaker roles, including adults. Directive force is

softened through optionality markers (*istersen*), affiliative discourse particles (*hadi*), inclusive first-person plural forms (*yapalım, geçelim*), and community-oriented justification patterns, reflecting a participation-based and relationally framed model of authority. Unlike performance- and precision-oriented legitimation models, Turkish child-directed discourse licenses authority through warmth, shared responsibility, and collective well-being, embedding directives within affiliative alignment rather than unilateral enforcement. Additionally, silence although not empirically evidenced in the dataset emerges in the literature as a culturally meaningful resource linked to dignity and wisdom, further supporting the broader cultural interpretation of Turkish indirectness.

Taken together, the findings indicate that German cartoons socialize children into a communicative environment where rules are explicitly stated and authority is linguistically overt, whereas Turkish cartoons model interactional norms in which authority is legitimate yet linguistically softened, relationally aligned, and explanation supported. This demonstrates that lexical and pragmatic choices function as key carriers of culturally modeled directive norms in child-focused media, a level of analysis that remains comparatively underexplored in intercultural pragmatics research. By shifting the focus from adult institutional settings to child-directed animated discourse, this study expands current understanding of how cultural models of hierarchy, obligation, cooperation, and legitimacy are encoded and normalized for young audiences through media discourse. From a pedagogical perspective, these findings highlight the role of child-directed media as an informal site of learning, where interactional norms and expectations about authority and participation are implicitly modeled alongside entertainment.

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Yönlendirici Söylem ve Kültürlerarası İletişim: Türk ve Alman Çizgi Filmleri Örneği

Özet

Bu çalışma, yönlendiriciliğin Türk ve Alman çocuklara yönelik animasyon dizilerinde dilsel ve kültürel olarak nasıl inşa edildiğini incelemektedir. Söz edim kuramı ve kültürlerarası edimbilim çerçevesinden hareketle, çözümlenme; otorite, yükümlülük ve kişilerarası ilişkilerin müzakere edildiği, toplumsal olarak gömülü pratikler olarak yönlendirici söz edimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Nitel söylem çözümlemesi kullanılarak, yönlendirici örnekler doğrudanlık derecelerine ve bunların sözlüksel ve edimbilimsel gerçekleştirmelerine göre belirlenmiş ve sınıflandırılmıştır. Bulgular, kültürlerarası düzeyde sistematik farklılıklar ortaya koymaktadır. Alman çizgi filmleri, yalın emir kipleri ve açık yükümlülük belirteçleri gibi doğrudan stratejileri ağırlıklı olarak kullanmakta; böylece otoriteyi kural temelli, açık ve pedagojik olarak meşrulaştırılmış bir yapı içinde sunmaktadır. Buna karşılık, Türk çizgi filmleri; isteğe bağlılık belirteçleri, kapsayıcı yapılar ve yakınlık ifade eden hitap biçimleri gibi geleneksel olarak dolaylı ve yumuşatılmış biçimleri tercih etmekte; bu yolla otoriteyi ilişkisel olarak müzakere edilen ve iş birliği odaklı bir konumda çerçevelemektedir. Bu örüntüler, animasyon medyasının çocuk izleyiciler için yönlendirici iletişimin farklı normlarını modelleyen, kültürel olarak aracılanmış bir dil sosyalleşmesi ortamı işlevi gördüğünü göstermektedir. Çalışma, odağını yetişkinlere yönelik kurumsal bağlamlardan çocuklara yönelik medya söylemine kaydırarak, kültürlerarası edimbilim, dil sosyalleşmesi ve medya söylemi araştırmalarına katkı sunmakta; aynı zamanda çocukların erken öğrenme süreçlerinde otorite, katılım ve yönlendirici etkileşimlere ilişkin pedagojik beklentilerin nasıl biçimlendiğine ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: yönlendiricilik; kültürlerarası edimbilim; dil sosyalleşmesi; animasyon medyası söylemi; Türk ve Alman çizgi filmleri

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