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LINGUISTIC POLITENESS IN TURKISH CHILD-DIRECTED SPEECH

Türkçe Çocuğa Yöneltilmiş Konuşmada Dilbilimsel Kibarlık

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Abstract

Fully acquiring a language is concerned with both linguistic and communicative competence. In order to be able to conclude that a child has learned his mother tongue, what he has acquired in the domain of linguistic competence, should be supported by language use in appropriate contexts, called as social competence (Semrud-Clikeman, 2007). As children, especially in the early period, are primarily surrounded by their caregivers, the langue they are exposed to is characterized by the properties of child-directed speech (CDS) which are different from those of adult-to-adult speech. According to Peccei (2006), some modifications in CDS when talking to their children are shorter MLU, more content words but fewer function words and more repetitions. Through CDS, parents also provide social opportunities to their children so they will develop a social and cultural understanding of their first language. This research is concerned with the role of Turkish CDS in children's acquiring the pragmatic functions of their native language, specifically politeness. Specifically, the aim of this research is to investigate linguistic politeness frames in Turkish CDS, so we will be able to keep a track of politeness in the language children mostly hear. To achieve this overall goal of our study, we analysed longitudinal data of video-recordings based on 9 Turkish mothers' natural interaction with their children aged nearly 01;04-03;06. In an overall manner, the results indicated a paralellism between Turkish children's order of politeness acquisition markers and Turkish CDS.

Keywords: child-directed speech, politeness, L1 acquisition, pragmatic development

Özet

Bir dili tam olarak edinmek hem dilbilimsel hem iletişimsel edinç ile ilgilidir. Bir çocuğun anadilini edindiği sonucuna varabilmek için dilbilimsel edinç boyutunun, dil kullanımını doğru durumlarda kullanması boyutunu da içeren sosyal edinç ile desteklemesi gerekir (Semrud-Clikeman, 2007). Çocuklar özellikle erken dönemde zamanlarının çoğunu kendilerine bakan kişi ile geçirirler. Çocukların bu dönemde maruz kaldıkları dil, çocuğa yöneltilmiş konuşma (ÇYK) olarak adlandırılır ki bu dil, yetişkinlerin birbirleri ile iletişimde kullandıkları dilden farklıdır. Peccei'ye göre (2006); çocuğa yöneltilmiş konuşmanın bazı özellikleri şöyledir: daha düşük ortalama sözce uzunluğu, daha fazla içeriksel sözcük ama daha az işlevsel sözcük ve daha fazla tekrar. ÇYK aracılığıyla, ebeveynler çocuklarına anadillerinin kültürel ve sosyal boyutlarını da edinecekleri fırsatlar sağlarlar. Bu araştırma anadili Türkçe olan çocukların anadillerinin edimbilimsel işlevlerinden biri olan kibarlık işlevini edinmelerinde Türkçe çocuğa yöneltilmiş konuşmanın rolünü incelemektedir. Araştırma özellikle Türkçe çocuğa yöneltilmiş konuşmadaki dilbilimsel incelik yapılarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Böylece çocukların duydukları dilde ne tür incelik çerçeveleri ile karşılaştıklarının bir kaydı tutulmuş olacak. Bu amaçla, yaşları 01;04 ile 03;06 arasında değişen 9 çocuk ve onların annelerini boylamsal olarak doğal ortamlarda çocukları ile iletişim içinde iken çekilmiş video-kamera kayıtlarına dayanan bir veri tabanı incelendi. Genel anlamda araştırmanın sonuçları çocukları incelik yapılarını kullanım sıraları ile annelerin bu yapıları kullanımları arasında paralellikler olduğuna işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: çocuğa yöneltilmiş konuşma (ÇYK), kibarlık, anadil edinimi, edimbilimsel gelişim

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The effects of child-directed speech on the acquisition of politeness routines

Children's main interaction with their mother tongue basically starts through maternal speech as mothers have been regarded to be primary caregivers. In a broader sense, motherese has been referred as child-directed or caregiver speech in the related literature. Child-directed speech (CDS, hereafter) has been considered to provide one of the central language input sources to young children (Bornstein and Lamb, 1992; Pine, 1994). Studies starting from the 70s indicated common properties of child-directed speech. According to accumulated findings, CDS has been found to be higher in pitch, short and simple in utterances, exaggerated in intonation, to be frequent in use of limited vocabulary, to include more questions and descriptive sentences (Hampson and Nelson, 1993). Despite some consensus about the characteristics of CDS in the related domain, the link between input and interaction has always been open to discussions. According to some researchers, CDS has nothing to do with teaching a language, but just to show the real communicative functions of a language (Bohannan and Leubecker, 1988). However, the counter arguments come from the child language linguists in their fine-tuning hypothesis. They claim that in CDS, speakers fine-tune their speech in line with the capacity of their listener and the setting (Newport et al. 1977). Kwan (1999) shows all CDS-related determinants as in Figure 1.
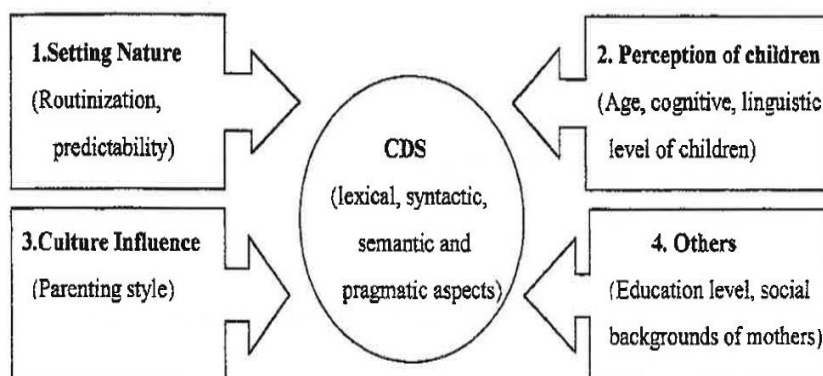

Figure 1. Schematic diagram of conceptual model of different determinants influences on CDS features (in Kwan, 1999)

As clearly demonstrated in Figure 1, CDS has been in interaction with four main components and it is based on lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspects. Though lexical, semantic and syntactic properties of CDS are primarily attached to the language, itself, pragmatic aspect also covers the social and cultural norms of that language. It is inevitable to infer that culture-specific values regarding child rearing practises influence the content and function of maternal speech. For example; Clancy (1986) observed that Japanese mothers gave much emphasis on their talk to their children about the infant's role in the society and they practised routines with their children and taught them how to respond in a polite way and to take into account the feelings of the person the child was talking to (in Schiefflin and Ochs, 1986). Therefore; CDS can be considered a way of introducing young children cultural and social characteristics of their native language as well (Schiefflin and Ochs, 1986). According to Gleason and Perlman (1985), mothers do not interrupt their children's syntactic and semantic language uses/misuses. But they play an active role in children's use of linguistic politeness devices (for further discussion about the role of input, see Gathercole and Hoff, 2007).

Politeness is an important component of social competence in a language. Using politeness norms in appropriate contexts has been regarded as a symbol of a child's communicative competence (Gleason & Perlman, 1985). The instance given below from a study by Andersen (1990) exemplifies a child's awareness of politeness strategies in his native language. This dialogue is taking place between a child (aged 4;10) in the role of a wife and an experimenter in the role of a snoring husband (in Peccei, 2006).

Wife: Oh dear, will you don't snore please- that wakes me up.

Husband: Oh, I'm sorry, Okay, I'll turn over and sleep (snores again).

Wife: Dear, you're still snoring.

Husband: Oh, oh, maybe I'll go down and get a glass of water. Maybe that will help.

             ..... (comes back and begins snoring again)

Wife: Don't snore!

Peccei (2006) comments on this dialogue and says that the child in the role of a wife is aware of the different levels of politeness in directives in his mother tongue. Especially in the flow of the dialogue, it can clearly be seen the child starts with an indirect directive in the form of a question –which is a very polite form. Also, she uses "please" as a politeness marker with a justification of her request. Next, she adds "Dear" to continue her insistence to stop snoring as a hint. Finally, as she could not prevent her husband from snoring, she concludes with a bare imperative –the least polite style. As seen in this example, the child, in the role of a wife, is aware of pragmatically-appropriate style to talking to her husband.

Research about how children learn to use socially-acceptable language is plentiful. Since the 70's, children's use of ritualized speech has been investigated (Gleason and Weintraub, 1976). Ritualized speech is a kind of language use which consists of formula based markers of polite speech about what to use on a specific context (Gleason & Perlman, 1985). For example; children are explicitly guided to say "thank you" after they receive something such as a present or some help and to greet people around in the first encounters and to say "goodbye" when it is time to leave. Interestingly, Gleason and Perlman added that children are encouraged to thank even for a present that they do not like, so it can be inferred that politeness sometimes becomes more important than being true. Schieffelin (1990) with Kaluli children and Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo (1986) with Kwara'ae children also provided data supporting the findings that children are guided to use polite language. A polite speaking style can also be provided through the addition of diminutives into language uses. Sifinaou (1992) investigated the function of diminutives in a comparative study between English and Greek and found that the pragmatic functions of diminutives are more than just to show endearment and smallness but as a marker of informal politeness. Moreover; polite vocatives in addressing the hearer in a talk are a way of showing politeness in a language.

1.1.Linguistic markers of politeness in first language acquisition in Turkish

The system of linguistic politeness in Turkish works in terms of modifying the syntactic structure of the sentence in various forms. These structural linguistic politeness markers in Turkish have been investigated in first language acquisition studies by Aksu-Koç and Slobin (1985). According to the results of their studies, the acquisition order of these structures is:

a) ver "give" (bare infinitive)

b) ver-sene "give" ("imperative + softener")

c) ver-ir-mi-sin "will you: familiar give" ("give –AORIST-Q-2SG")

d) ver-ir-mi-siniz "will you: polite give" ("give-AORIST-Q-2PL")

Aksu-Koç & Slobin mention that Turkish adults mostly pay attention to the use of *siz* (second person plural) and to the use of *lütfen* "please" and polite vocatives in their talk to their children. Turkish mothers were also seen to prompt their children by explictly saying their children to talk nicely.

1.2.Research questions

The aim of this study is two fold:

a) to see what kind of linguistic politeness frames Turkish children are exposed to through CDS in terms of structural frames, lexical frames, and routines.

b) to see whether there is parallelism between CDS and children's order of acquisition of linguistic politeness markers as found in the related literature by Aksu-Koç and Slobin (1985).

2. Methodology

2.1. Corpus

The data of this study are natural child-centered interactions. Two different data sets were used in this study. The first set included five female children (from 1;04 to 2;04) and their mothers. In this study, this set represented the early period of language acquisition (Türkay, 2005). The second set included four female children (from 2;08 to 3;04), their mothers and other family members (Sofu, 1995). Mainly, 9 Turkish speaking children's longitudinal spontaneous speech data (from 1;04 to 3;6) based on video-recordings were examined in relation with the research questions given above. As showing the developmental trajectories in politeness markers was aimed to find out, seven time points were chosen from two different longitudinal data sets.

2.2. Coding and Analysis

Transcriptions prepared following the CHILDES, Clan format were taken into analysis (MacWhinney, 1991). Each transcribed session was carefully read and related parts were extracted and saved in a separate file. In a typical CHILDES, Clan file, speakers' tiers are supported by some extra information lines when supplementary info is needed to grasp the complete meaning of that utterance. As politeness may directly be related to the underlying meaning of that utterance, extra information tiers were also considered for a reliable analysis.

In line with the structural politeness markers found by Aksu-Koç and Slobin (1985), the parallel frames in Turkish CDS in the corpus were extracted and presented as the numerical data in Figures 1 and 2. Then, the lexical politeness chunks "lütfen" –please- and "teşekkürler/teşekkür ederim/sağol" –thanks/thank you/May you be well were considered and analysed. The frequencies of them were given in Table 1 and 2 and some example uses were given. Lastly, ritualized speech samples in Turkish CDS in terms of politeness frames were taken from the data sets.

3. Results

3.1.Structural Linguistic Politeness Frames

The main form of talking to children is directives as they help to guide children's physical and verbal behaviours. Directives vary from direct to indirect and the most indirect directives are considered to be more polite (Blum-Kulka et al. 1984). From the perspective of politeness, the mothers' action requests directed to their children were taken into analysis. As directives in CDS are mostly in the form of imperatives (Sofu, 2004), their frequency in the positive and negative forms were calculated. Following the politeness structures offered by Aksu-Koç and Slobin (1985), the frequency of softener marker "-sAnA", and -mIsIn/-mIsInIz were also analysed. Additionally, Sofu (2004) states that "let's do x" statements are also a way of indirectly requiring the child to do an action. Therefore; this marker was added as a linguistic politeness item into the coding list offered by Aksu-Koç and Slobin (1985). Finally, a list of five main structural linguistic politeness frames emerged and their frequencies in Turkish CDS were calculated. Figure 2 illustrates the mean percentage of these structures from the developmental perspective of the children in data-set 1. As seen in Figure 2, starting from the first period, Turkish mothers use imperatives in talking to their children. In the first, second and third period, the ratio of imperatives is higher than the other categories but in the fourth period, the use of imperatives decreases; whereas, the use of negative imperatives and softener increase. The politeness structure

"-mIsIn/-mIsInIz" can be seen even from 1;04 but its ratio does not show any drastic change in the developmental process. The same pattern is also valid for "let's do x" statements.

This shows that through CDS, the Turkish children in our data-set 1 are exposed to different forms of linguistic politeness structures, even at a very young age. Therefore, it can be regarded as a way of children's awareness raising to use language differently, making required adaptations in line with the appropriateness of the social situation.
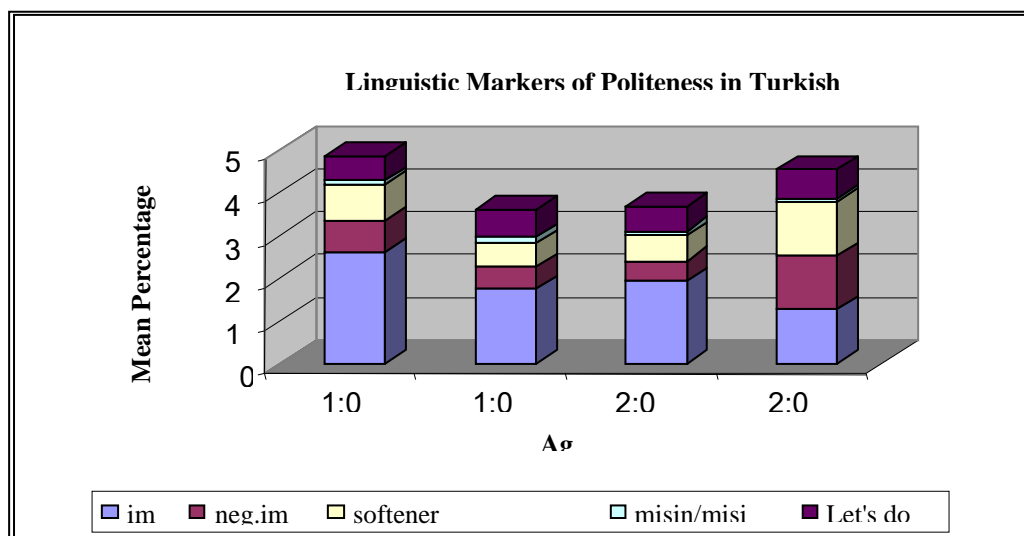

Figure 1. Linguistic Markers of Politeness in Turkish CDS –Data Set 1

Figure 2 shows the mean percentage of these structures from the developmental perspective of the children in data-set 2. In this data set, the frequency of the mothers' utterances are quite limited because there are other family members in the recordings and because the children have become active participants of the conversation.

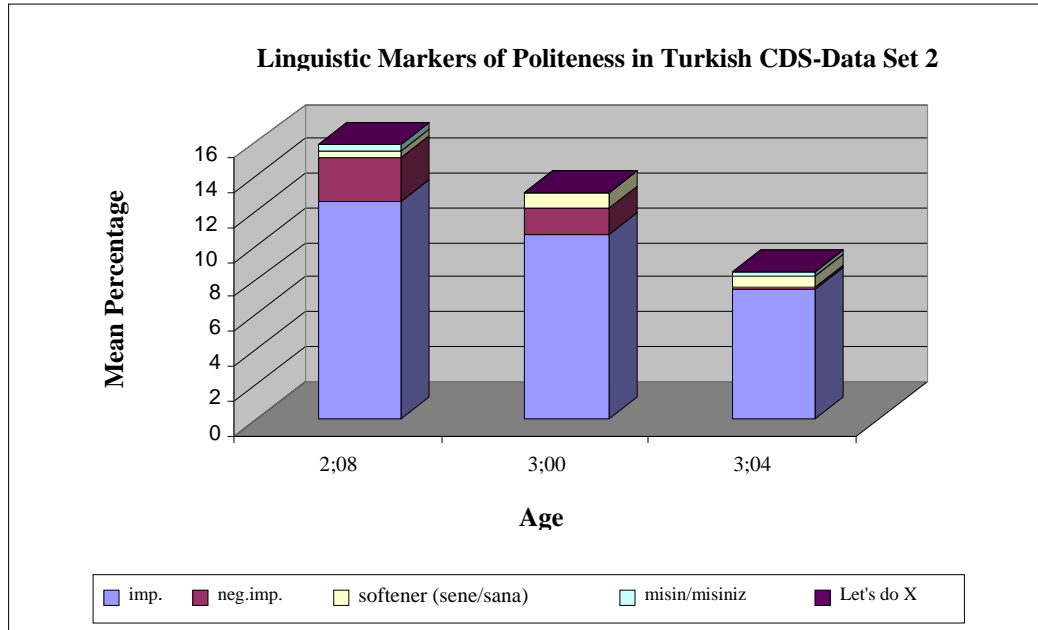**Linguistic Markers of Politeness in Turkish CDS-Data Set 2**

Figure 2. Linguistic Markers of Politeness in Turkish CDS-Data Set 2

As seen in Figure 2, the mothers talk to their children in the form of imperatives, with a higher percentage when their children are at the age of 2;08 and lower percentage at 3;04. There is a gradual fall in the negative imperatives as well. Different from the data-set 1, "let's do x" statements are very rare in data-set 2.

When the politeness patterns are compared into each other, it can be said that Turkish mothers use directives in the form of imperatives while talking to their children. The softener structure "-sAnA" and "-mIsIn/-mIsInIz" are also seen starting from the early period but they are not very frequent. "Let's do X" statements are mostly preferred by the mothers whose children are young. This may derive from the fact that mothers involve in activities or games with their children in a more collaborative manner when their children are younger or young children are more dependent on their mothers in the early period.

3.2. Lexical Politeness Frames/Chunks

Lexical politeness frames are categorized under three sub-categories.

3.2.1. Polite Vocatives

Lexical politeness frames are mostly related to the use of polite vocatives and endearment terms. Even a very direct imperative can change into a more polite action request when a polite vocative or an endearment term is added into the related context. Aronsson and

Thorell (1999) politeness is not always directly related to indirectness, it may be related to overall mitigation in which verbal softening devices such as endearment terms or familiar type of address and nonverbal modes are used.The following extracts exemplify this function: In example (1), the mother first wants her daughter to give her the remote control, then the slippers. In all her utterances, she uses a different polite vocative in addressing her daughter such as my baby, my dear mother. Then, she gives an explanation for her request and repeats herself. After she receives her slippers, she thanks repeatedly and in an emphatic manner.

Ex 1: C4's mother talking to her daughter (aged 1;04)

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*MOT: hadi kumandayı getir **bebeğim**

 *"bring me the remote control, **my baby**"*

*MOT: bana da terliğimi getirir misin **Şermin**?

*"Can you bring me my slippers, **Şermin**?"*

*MOT: bana terliğimi getirir misin **anneciğim**?

*"Can you bring me my slippers**, my dear mother**?"*

*MOT: bak ayağımda terliğim yok.

"You see I have no slippers"

*MOT: hadi bana terliğimi getir.

"Bring me my slippers "

*MOT: getir anneciğim hadi.

*"Bring **my dear mother"***

*MOT: evet: teşekkür ederim aferin sana.

"Yes: Thank you, well-done"

*MOT: teşekkür ederim.

"Thank you"

3.2.2. "Lütfen" -please

"Lütfen" is also another lexical politess expression in Turkish. We counted its frequency in our data sets as a lexical item. No use of "lütfen" –please- is seen in the data set-2. That's why; only the results based on the data-set 1 is given. Table 1 shows that C4's and C5's mothers have not used "lütfen" –please- in their talks to their daughters. C2's mother is the one who uses this expression the most. In this respect, it should be further investigated if "lütfen" –please- is widely used in Turkish adult-to-adult speech. If it were frequently used in adult-to-adult speech, then, it might be inferred that the mothers do not prefer to use this expression on purpose to their children. If it were not very often used in adult-to-adult speech, then the use "lütfen" –please- might be considered as a culture-specific characteristic of Turkish.

Table 1. Frequency of "Lütfen" in the Mothers' Speech in data-set 1

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
1;04	0	4	0	0	0
1;08	2	4	0	0	0
2;00	2	0	1	0	0
2;04	1	0	0	0	0

The function of the limited number of use of "lütfen"(please) is also taken into account. The following extracts exemplify different uses of "lütfen". In example 2, the mother makes a negative request, adding "lütfen" –please- as well.

Ex: 2 C2's mother talking to her daughter (aged 1;08)

%act: CHI has a car key in her hand and tries to open the doors at home.

*MOT: anneciğim, içerde kaldık biz, lütfen bizi kapatma buraya.

"My dear mother, we stayed inside, please do not lock us here.

*MOT: aç şu kapıyı, kilitleme, içeri gel.

"Open that door, do not lock, come in"

*MOT: hoşgeldin anneciğim.

"Welcome, my dear mother"

*MOT: hadi bir hoşgeldin yapalım.

"Let's do/say welcome"

In example 3, the mother wants her daughter to put her glass onto the plate but it seems that the child does not follow her mother's directive. This causes the mother to put an emphasis on her directive, adding "lütfen" –*please.*

Ex: 3 C3's mother talking to her daughter (aged 2;00)

*MOT: bardağını tepsiye koyar mısın?

"*Can you put your glass onto the plate?"*

*MOT: dökülecek kızım.

"It will pour, my daughter"

*MOT: öksürürsün.

"You will cough."

*MOT: anneciğim.

"My dear mother"

*MOT: anneciğim, lütfen.

"My dear mother, please"

*MOT: ağzını sil bakayım.

"Let's see, clean your mouth."

Here, a parallelism has been observed with Sofu's findings (2004) about the use of "lütfen" –please as a way of indicating negative and positive politeness depending on the context.

3.2.3. "Teşekkürler/Teşekkür Ederim/Sağol" –*Thanks/Thank you/May you be well*

Teşekkürler/Teşekkür ederim/Sağol –*Thanks/Thank you/May you be well* are lexical politeness items-two thanking formulae in Turkish. Two data sets in our research are searched for these items. The results are shown as raw data for their frequency as they are very limited in number. Table 2 only illustrates "teşekkürler/teşekkür ederim" – thanks/thank you because "sağol" –*May you be well* has not been found in both data sets. Also, no information is given about the data set-2 since these thanking formulae are not used by the mothers in this data set.

As seen in Table 2, C4's mother uses "teşekkürler/teşekkür ederim" -*thanks/thank you*-more frequently than other mothers. C1's and C5's mothers do not use these expressions in the first two age points but only in the last two time points. C2's mother only uses them in the first time point.

Table 2. Frequency of "teşekkürler/teşekkür ederim" –*thanks/thank you*- in the Mothers' Speech in Data Set-1

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
1;04	0	1	1	4	0
1;08	0	0	0	6	0
2;00	3	0	0	3	5
2;04	0	0	3	0	1

Some examples are given from the exact transcriptions below: In example 3, the mother makes a request, using second person singular form and adding an endearment term. Then, she mentions repeatedly that her daughter is polite with her behaviour. Then, she controls her daughter whether she has thanked overtly or not . After she hears that her daughter has thanked, she positively reinforces her daughter's response.

Ex: 4 C1's mother talking to her daughter (aged 2;00)

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*MOT: verir misin anneciğim?
*"Can you give it to me, **my dear mother**?"*
*MOT:çok kibar davranıyorsun.
"You are being very polite."
*MOT: <benim> [/].
"Mine"
*OYA: çok kibarsın.
"You are very polite"
*CHI: yok.
"No"
*MOT: teşekkür ederim dedin mi aşkım?
*"Have you said "thank you", **my love**?"*
*MOT: teşekkür ettin mi?
"Have you thanked?"
*CHI: teşekkür ederim.
"Thank you"
*MOT: aferin.
"Well-done"

In this example (5) , the mother wants her child to thank as the reseachers gives a ball as a present to the child. After her first directive,she encourages the child to thank. As the child does not give any response, the mother wants the child to say "eline sağlık" –*God bless your hands*- which is not an appropriate use for that situation but this is a kind of thanking, anyway.

Ex: 5 C5's mother talking to her daughter (aged 2,00)

*MOT: evet, sana top getirmiş, teşekkür et bakalım.
"Yes, she brought you a ball, let's thank her."
*MOT: Ezgi, teşekkür ederim de anneciğim hadi.
*"Ezgi, let's say thank you, **my dear mother**."*
*MOT: bir teşekkür et ablaya.
"Thank the elder sister"
*MOT: söyle teşekkür ederim.
"Say thank you"
*CHI: O.
*MOT: eline sağlık de o zaman.
"Or say God bless your hands"
*MOT: eline sağlık de kızım.
*"Say God bless your hands, **my daughter**"*
*CHI: eline sağlık.
"God bless your hands"

3.3.Routines

Child-directed speech is also important for modelling appropriate language use, particulary in terms of contextual/situational routines. In example 5; the mother wants the child to greet her father who has just arrived. The mother not only guides the child to say "hoşgeldin" –welcome- and at the same time, she tries to receive her child's attention to her father's arrival, then to say "hoş geldin" –*welcome.*

Ex 6: C4's mother talking to her daughter (aged 1;04)

*MOT: baba mı gelmiş?
"Have your mother arrived?"
*MOT: seni götürsün mü atta?
"Will he take you out?"
*MOT: götürsün mü seni gezmeye?
"Will he take you out?"
*MOT: evet mi?
"Yes?"
%act: CHI smiles.
*MOT: gezmeye mi götürsün seni?
"Will he take you out?"
*MOT: gel bakalım merhaba diyelim babasına.
"Come, let'say hello to her father"
*MOT: hoşgeldin diyelim.
"Let's say welcome"
*MOT: hoşgeldin diyelim babaya.
"Let's say welcome to the father"
*MOT: hoşgeldin diyelim.
"Let's say welcome"

In example 7, the mother shows a model of how to make a request, adding please into the context. The mother provides a context for the child to practise a request.

Ex 7: C3's mother talking to her daughter (aged 2;00)

*MOT: sana da alalım mı kızım bundan?
"Do you want to buy this one for you, my daughter?"
*CHI: evet.
"Yes"
*MOT: teyzeye soralım.
"Let's ask the aunt"
*MOT: bu nerde satılıyor diyelim, lütfen bana da alalım diyelim.
"Let's ask where it is sold, let's say "buy this for me as well, please".

As seen in these examples, the mothers have a teaching role for their children, modelling appropriate language uses in socially convenient situations, which is in line with the research findings in the related field by Matychuk (2005). He claims through CDS, the child is exposed to more interactive negotiation and the child learns language functions by means of this exposure.

4. **Discussion and Conclusion**

There has been a huge amount of research on early child language development mainly on syntactic, morphological, and lexical development. While all of these developments are crucial steps to an adult-like language system, social competence is also a complementary part for all these components as it reflects successive uses of all language related parties. Children are very precocious in understanding in social acts, particulary in differentiating directives, offers, descriptions, prohibitions, and requests for information. CDS is also a good input source for children to acquire these speech acts. According to Matychuk (2005), CDS works as a crucial catalyst in the complicated development of L1 acquisition. Politeness, within the scope of speech act theory, is a key component of achieving communicative competence. Our findings support that there are similarities between CDS and children's production in terms of overall developmental pattern about linguistic politeness markers. We can say that mothers constitute a good example for their children in acquiring these markers. Kuntay et al. (in press) make a comprehensive research evaluation about children's pragmatic development and support the early emergence of children's pragmatic development through crosslinguistic and crosscontextual studies. They claim that parent-child interactions are a way of explicit linguistic socialization. Richards and Gallaway (1994) add that among the functions of CDS, politeness routines teaching is done through conscious effort. However, the related field is still in need of more studies, especially crosslinguistic research, in order to provide a more detailed understanding of children's pragmatic progress and the effects of CDS.

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