

**Cognitive Stylistic Approaches to Educational
Instructions: Insights**

from Educated Kurdish Families

المقاربات الأسلوبية المعرفية للتعليمات التعليمية: رؤى من الأسر الكردية المتعلمة



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Abstract

Within Kurdish families, Kurdish parents were the main source of supervising the education of their children. However, other sources of information participate in this challenging mission. In the last fifteen years, other sources such as technological advancements, media, friends, and schoolmates have had a significant effect on how children think or behave. For that reason, it becomes hard for parents to approach their children. Children's study and education is one of the challenging periods for almost all parents. The way parents give educational instructions to their children concerning their studying style and handling of school subjects is of great importance. Thus, this study offers a comprehensive cognitive stylistic analysis of the way educated Kurdish parents provide educational instructions to their children. The key devices of cognitive stylistics are Schema-Theory, Text-World Theory. This study explores the cognitive processes and stylistic features employed in parental educational instructions within family discourse. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method by focusing on, highlighting, and analyzing each line in the instructions.

Keywords: Kurdish family context, cognitive stylistics, Schema-Theory, Text- World theory, educational instruction.

داخل الأسر الكردية، كان الآباء الأكراد المصدر الرئيسي للإشراف على تعليم أطفالهم. ومع ذلك، تشارك مصادر أخرى للمعلومات في هذه المهمة الصعبة. في السنوات الخمس عشرة الماضية، كان لمصادر أخرى مثل التقدم التكنولوجي ووسائل الإعلام والأصدقاء وزملاء المدرسة تأثير كبير على كيفية تفكير الأطفال أو سلوكهم. ولهذا السبب، يصبح من الصعب على الآباء التعامل مع أطفالهم. تعتبر دراسة الأطفال وتعليمهم إحدى الفترات الصعبة التي يواجهها جميع الآباء تقريباً. إن الطريقة التي يقدم بها الآباء التعليمات التعليمية لأطفالهم فيما يتعلق بأسلوب دراستهم وتعاملهم مع المواد المدرسية لها أهمية كبيرة. وبالتالي، تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً أسلوبياً معرفياً شاملاً للطريقة التي يقدم بها الآباء الأكراد المتعلمون التعليمات التعليمية لأطفالهم. الأجهزة الرئيسية للأسلوبية المعرفية هي نظرية المخطط، ونظرية عالم النص. تستكشف هذه الدراسة العمليات المعرفية والسمات الأسلوبية المستخدمة في التعليمات التربوية الوالدية ضمن الخطاب العائلي. يستخدم هذا البحث المنهج الوصفي النوعي من خلال التركيز على كل سطر في التعليمات وإبرازه وتحليله.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سياق الأسرة الكردية، الأسلوبية المعرفية، نظرية السكيا، نظرية تيكست ويرلد، التعليم التربوي.



Introduction

The use of language is based on our thoughts. Everything we say originates in our minds, whether on the surface or in great detail (Zhou, 2023). Thoughts can be conveyed, to some extent, through words; when people ask, "What are you thinking?", they expect a meaningful response. It is important to note, however, that there is no direct way to access thoughts, and the language used to express them does not perfectly mirror the actual thoughts. The relationship between language and thought is complex, yet undoubtedly systematic (Miller, 1951). Language acts as a means of communication. Each speech community has its specific language for mutual understanding. Every language user has a unique way of expression that differs from other users. According to Adebayo et al (2020), language is seen as a tool of thought that binds human societies together in communities and linguistic groups.

In the context of family, language greatly influences communication. Parents must make efforts to understand and communicate with their children. In this study, parental educational instructions are used as an example of language use. For these instructions to be effective, parents need to thoughtfully consider how they deliver their messages and what language is most effective in different everyday communication contexts, especially when giving instructions to their children about their daily routines.

The objective of this study is to explore how educated Kurdish parents give instructions to their children regarding their performance in school and education. This is examined within the framework of the cognitive-stylistic approach. The study aims to address the following questions:

How do Kurdish Parents instruct and guide their children when education is of concern?

What are the cognitive-stylistic techniques that characterize Kurdish parental educational instructions to their children?

How do the approaches combined account for how family discourse is perceived?

How do the educational experience and prior knowledge of the parents affect their instructions?

How do parents recognize and produce the responses?



How do parents establish meaning based on their schemata?

To verify the hypothesis that Schema Theory and Text World Theory can be useful in the interpretation and comprehension of the instructions offered to the children by their parents, an in-depth cognitive stylistic analysis will be carried out to reveal important hints concerning interpreting the instructions offered by parents and to provide answers to the questions raised above.

2. Discourse: Family Context

Discourse is a comprehensive notion including two unequal components, i.e., text and speech. At the same time, discourse is a cognitive process, and text/speech is its outcome. Makarov (2003) states that “discourse is as vital to social sciences as the euro is to the European economy”. Discourse has a specific structure consisting of the sender, recipient, message context, language, and speech code sequence (Kartabayeva et al., 2016). According to Golubovskaya et al. (2022), discourse reflects the mental world of a person in his/her certain interpretation, which is considered a subjectively marked phenomenon.

As part of discourse, family discourse is the oral form of the interaction of family members in different contexts (Carbaugh, 2007). Its purpose is to share the meaningful thoughts and intentions of family members. Therefore, family discourse differs from everyday communication such that the oral arrangements are irregular and often guided by domestic life (Sevastyanova, 2018). This discourse does not rely on fixed norms but requires constant discussion, conversation, repeated traditions, and boundaries being re-emphasized. Family communication is an essential element within a family, distinguished by its unique qualities that set it apart from other forms of communication. This type of interaction involves oral exchanges between family members in different situations, aimed at sharing meaningful thoughts and intentions. Unlike regular communication, family discourse is marked by spontaneous oral arrangements that are often influenced by domestic life. It doesn't follow strict rules but instead requires ongoing dialogue, conversation, the repetition of traditions, and the reiteration of boundaries.

The participants in family communication are family members who share a subjective and evaluative sense of belonging and



connection to each other. The family is viewed as a socially regulated institution guided by unspoken laws of intra-family relationships. Within the context of family communication, expectations and objectives are set for each specific interaction, and family roles are established, challenged, and negotiated by those involved (Blum-Kulka, 1987). These roles vary based on gender and hierarchy within the family and are expressed in culturally specific manners. It is noted that parents establish and perpetuate gender roles, such as women taking on the majority of the household chores and child-rearing responsibilities. Additionally, parents act as role models for nurturing children and reinforcing the family's unity for long-term continuation (Carbaugh, 2007). Parents can socialize their children in anticipation of these challenges. Activities such as role modelling, discipline, establishing family rules and routines, and building self-regulation skills (Thompson, 2013) help children adjust to school and develop their social identity (Doty et al., 2017). Parents also teach their children about cultural beliefs and practices of their ethnic or religious heritage, including ways of celebrating, mourning, childrearing, and praying (Belsey, 2001). Educated parents are expected to raise accomplished and socially adept individuals equipped with knowledge, awareness, and empathy, thereby contributing to society (Muhammed et al., 2022).

3. An Overview of Cognitive-Stylistics

Cognitive stylistics from the start is a cognitive approach to language. As stated by Hamawand (2023) the field of Cognitive Linguistics was pioneered by Ronald Langacker, George Lakoff, Charles Fillmore, and others in the later decades of the twentieth century. The presumptions used in cognitive linguistics form the foundation of cognitive stylistics. One presumption is that Language and human thought are closely intertwined. An expression has meaning and reflects a specific cognitive organization, or more specifically, a specific sort of interpretation thrust onto its framework. The stylistic options are not comparable since an expression has meaning. Their motivation stems from conceptual considerations.

According to (Gavins and Steen, 2003). Cognitive stylistics is more focused on providing a thorough and descriptive description of a speech's/text's linguistic properties in a mechanistic, non-evaluative



manner. According to Stockwell (2002), cognitive stylistics approaches people as cognitive human beings who comprehend discourses by drawing on their prior experiences and knowledge. In other words, cognitive stylistics provides crucial tools that help the listener/reader understand the speech/text and its context, as well as the situations and applications, knowledge, and beliefs. Therefore, it can be viewed as a place for listeners/readers to begin comprehending and approaching the construction of a spoken/written framework. Woldemariam (2015) reports a viewpoint on cognitive stylistics that is comparable to this: Cognitive stylistics centers its analytical space around cognition and contextual effects. The speech/text or the phrase is at the core of both formalist and functionalist stylistics models' analyses. Most of them are text-immanent models. However, the cognitive stylistics approach interprets speeches/texts differently than textualist or contextualist stylistics. Additionally, as Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) show, cognitive stylistics considers the cognitive mechanisms via which readers react to specific elements of texts. It makes an effort to depict how readers use their schematic knowledge from everyday life to analyze discourse or texts (quoted in Patil, 2014).

Thus, it can be concluded that cognitive stylistics is a multidisciplinary field that draws inspiration from Cognitive Syntax and Computational Grammar. The primary focus of Cognitive Stylistics is on mental representation, setting it apart from other types of stylistic models. Instead of relying on written representation. It investigates the part the human cognitive system plays in language use. It learns what transpires mentally when it both creates and interprets words. It encapsulates the way the mind interprets reality. The writer, the text, and the reader are the three participants at the center of its analytical area. Unlike other models that center attention around one or more participants, Cognitive Stylistics emphasizes and gives due consideration to each participant. Meaning is the result of a communicative triangle: the writer produces a text, the reader interprets the text, and the text manifests creativity (Hamawand, 2023).

Since Schema Theory and Text World Theory are frequently employed in cognitive stylistic analysis and provide significant analytical frameworks to be utilized in the analysis stage, they will receive particular attention in this study. These two theories are further



explained in the section that follows.

3.1 Schema Theory

Schema is a cognitive structure that provides details about how we see the outside world. Common knowledge included in a schema aids readers or listeners in understanding reality by allowing them to extrapolate aspects that are either not discussed at all or are not fully explained in the conversation. It is defined by Anderson (1984) as a person's set of prior knowledge and experiences that enable a meaningful interpretation of newly acquired information. According to Simpson (2004), schema theory seems to be a "significant landmark" in the field of cognitive stylistic analysis. Schema theory examines how humans integrate their prior knowledge of the world with their perception of texts by rearranging pre-existing schemas to produce new worldviews. According to Stockwell (2002), schemas provide listeners with a valuable tool for deciphering information found in texts, both explicitly stated and implicitly stated. As a result, Marszalek (2012) notes that the hypothesis underlying the application of schema theory is that the reader's past experiences and background knowledge play a significant role in how they perceive speeches of any kind. In other words, people's interpretation of a speech depends on their background knowledge of the world. Thus, according to Alexander and Marsalek (2014), schemas are associated with shared information among listeners/readers; nevertheless, distinct types of knowledge may exist within social and cultural groups. In socio-cultural studies, socio-cultural schemas are dependent on various characteristics such as gender, age, race, and class. Additionally, they contend that listening/reading is more about experiencing the speech's/text's environment than it is about processing facts, and that's why we require a sensory schema to account for our understanding of what fundamental senses like vision, hearing, smell, touch, and taste are involved in.

3.2 Text World Theory

Text world theory is a cognitive tool that helps recipients understand how and even why they create mental images in their minds. This method enables the integration of various fields, including psychology, stylistics, and cognitive linguistics (Canning, 2010). Thus, Text World



Theory, which was first presented by Paul Wreth, is the other cognitive stylistics theory that is employed in this study.

Text world theory is a model of human language and a discourse framework that is based on cognitive psychology's findings on mental processes. In light of text world theory's emphasis on the construction of texts and how context shapes their creation and reception, an in-depth analysis of discourse necessitates an appreciation of their complexity as well as the development of an analytical framework that is specific to each text or speech (Gavins,2007). This theory's central tenet is that two discourse players must be available for the discourse world to function. Within the text world, people discuss things that have happened recently or in the past, as well as hypothetical or actual circumstances.

Thus; "the situation depicted by the discourse" is the text-world (Werth, 1999: 87). It is the participants' internal mental image of the conversation. It is defined initially by the conversation itself, and in particular by the deictic and referential elements in it (P. 7, 51, 180). However, the discourse participants contribute significantly to the richness of the text world through inferences and prior knowledge. When individuals converse, they collectively create a universe where the ideas are logical and consistent (Ibid).

4. Methodology

Due to the increasing curiosity in the interpretation process and the relationship between listener background knowledge and interpretation variability, the primary focus of this study is on examining how Schema and Text World theories are useful in the analysis of parent instructions in Kurdish culture. Applying schema theory to this type of discourse, i.e. Family discourse tends to challenge the listener's pre-existing schema. The study is within the framework of a cognitive stylistic approach, it explores the cognitive processes and stylistic features employed in parental educational instructions within family discourse. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method by focusing on, highlighting, and analyzing each line in the instructions. Randomly, fifteen graduate Kurdish parents are chosen to participate in this work. A questionnaire of six different questions is divided into two parts, part (A) includes three multiple-choice questions and (B) includes three short-answer questions. The questions are



concerned with some basic daily homework and school instructions that are often likely to be given to children to perform better in school and are answered by parents. The answers will be taken as data of this study which are analyzed in terms of the cognitive-stylistic theories of Schema and Text World.

5. Data Description

Written responses to a questionnaire that was developed by the researchers serve as the analysis's source of data. Six questions about frequent daily instructions on educational issues make up the questionnaire. In the Kurdish context, parents are probably giving their children these instructions. These answers are the analysis's data that have been carefully examined using the cognitive-stylistic approach. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix (1) attached. It is important to note that the parents are highly educated Kurdish educators with degrees in teaching various fields.

6. The Analysis

Based on the questionnaire provided by the researchers, the levels of recognition and production are examined in the data analysis as it includes multiple-choice items and short answer questions requiring a production form from the parent's side, and considering Text world theory, it can be seen from the results that parents rely on the language of the questions or the linguistic signals to comprehend or visualize the text world of the questions. These clues assist them in creating mental models that enable them to understand the questions. Those who build the worlds for these kinds of discourses include for instance: time: the verb tenses (doing, tomorrow, studying, advice, keep, etc.) are all in the present tense. This demonstrates the temporal disparity in the discourse world of parents. Another linguistic cue is location. For example, the word "school" makes it easier for them to assume that the entire environment is about education and schools. Additionally, turning to the recognition levels and taking into consideration the first three questions of the questionnaire provided in Appendix 1, including (A1, A2, & A3) the responses show that out of (10) parents (7) chose those replies that are in the form of indirect orders to address their children to study for instance for (A.1) it is Let's do your homework that gets higher frequency than the other two options, and the same holds true



for responses of questions (A.2) & ((A.3) for which response number two Are you ready for tomorrow's exam? and for (A.3) it is also response number two: When I was in school, each day, I spent two hours studying, getting higher frequency over other responses. This is evidence that most Kurdish parents refrain from giving their children direct instruction. They frequently take a deceptive strategy, asking probing questions, giving advice, making incentives, encouraging, and assisting. The fact that every parent who responded to the survey is educated explains why the children are being addressed in a sideways manner. They know enough about their children's crucial phases. They make an effort to lessen the impact of their teachings by being kind. However, this varies based on the kind of instruction given in each case.

Regarding the production level that has to do with the examination of the responses provided by the parents who took part in the survey, and taking the last three questions of the questionnaire provided in Appendix 1, including (B1, B2, & B3) into consideration, it can be said that the responses show that Kurdish parents make use of indirect guidance when it's part of educational instructions. Children are therefore likely to react favorably to such teaching. However; when instructing their children at the production level, they draw on their own experiences and prior knowledge. For the children to understand the lessons, parents attempt to put themselves in their children's position and show they are cooperative and concerned about the education of their children. In addition, parents attempt to install and build a mental image in the minds of their children of what it means to be a good student and how to achieve it.

Taking schema theory into consideration, the responses show that Kurdish parents concentrate on particular words in the questions (A & B 1,2. &3) at both the recognition and production levels for instance 'school, study, exams, etc'. To comprehend the questions, one must activate the "education or school" schema, put knowledge into practice, and recollect all of the entities and events related to the educational aspect. The first three questions, which are dedicated to test recognition level, help parents engage their schema for "education" by introducing terms like "school" and "study" and by anticipating that the person speaking is an educator. This way, the parent's understanding enables



them to interpret all question sequences. In questions B.1,2,3, the number of schemata increases quickly, necessitating production by the parents. Between themselves and the people they speak to, i.e their children, or the students—the parents begin to construct and envision the school and educational scene in an educational context. There are terms like friends, school materials, teachers, and so on. All of these raise doubts and conclude in the minds of parents regarding the educational environment, which turns out to be a school.

Findings and Discussions

The analysis of the questionnaire responses reveals significant insights into how educated Kurdish parents' guide their children through educational instructions. At the recognition level, parents predominantly rely on linguistic cues within the questions to understand and visualize the context. This reliance on language is evident in their cognitive ability to build mental models that help them comprehend the questions (this answers research question no.5). Temporal and location cues play crucial roles in this process. Temporal cues, such as verb tenses (e.g., "doing," "tomorrow," "studying," "advice," "keep"), help parents situate the discourse within a present or future context. The use of present tense verbs suggests that parents perceive the educational instructions as immediate and ongoing processes, reflecting the temporal nature of their involvement in their children's education. Location cues, such as the word "school," further assist parents in contextualizing the discourse within an educational setting. This helps parents activate relevant schemata, such as those related to school and education, facilitating their understanding and response to the questions (this answers research question no.6).

The responses to the first three questions (A1, A2, and A3) indicate a clear preference among Kurdish parents for indirect instructional strategies. For instance, in question A1, the option "Let's do your homework" received the highest frequency of responses, suggesting that educated Kurdish parents prefer to engage their children in collaborative and indirect forms of guidance rather than direct commands. Similarly, questions A2 and A3 showed a preference for indirect prompts like "Are you ready for tomorrow's exam?" and "When I was in school, each day, I spent two hours studying." This



tendency to avoid direct instructions and instead employ indirect strategies such as probing questions, advice, incentives, encouragement, and assistance can be attributed to the parents' educational background (this answers research question no.1) . Educated parents, aware of the crucial cognitive developmental stages of their children, aim to minimize the authoritarian impact of their instructions by adopting a more supportive and understanding cognitive approach.

At the production level, the analysis of the responses to the last three questions (B1, B2, and B3) demonstrates that educated Kurdish parents continue to employ indirect guidance when providing educational instructions. This indirect stylistic approach is likely to elicit a more positive response from children, as it creates a supportive and cooperative learning environment. Additionally, parents use their prior knowledge and personal experience when instructing their children (this answers questions no. 4 & 5). Particularly in the second part of the questionnaire, parents try to empathize with their children to help them understand the instructions. By putting themselves in their children's position, parents show empathy and concern for their children's education, which helps to create a mental image of what it means to be a good student and how to achieve academic success. This approach not only aids in the comprehension of the instructions but also serves to motivate and inspire children to follow their parents' guidance.

The application of Schema Theory and Text World Theory provides a deeper understanding of how Kurdish parents process and respond to educational instructions. The responses indicate that parents focus on specific words within the questions (e.g., "school," "study," "exams") to activate the relevant "education or school" schema. This activation helps parents put their knowledge into practice and recall-related entities and events, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the questions (this answers question no.3). For the recognition level questions (A1, A2, A3), parents engage their educational mental schema by identifying terms like "school" and "study," which primes them to interpret the questions within an educational context. This schema activation is crucial for parents to comprehend the sequence of questions and provide appropriate responses. In the production-level questions (B1, B2, B3), the complexity of the schemata increases,



requiring parents to produce more detailed and contextually rich responses. By drawing on their own experiences and situating themselves within the educational context, parents construct a mental image of the school environment, complete with friends, school materials, teachers, and other relevant elements. Parents try to create a sense of in-groupness for their children when instructing them, fostering a scheme that they are not alone in their academic efforts. This detailed mental construction aids parents in delivering effective educational instructions that resonate with their children. The stylistic features and cognitive roles employed by Kurdish parents are significant. One prominent stylistic feature is creating a mental image of how a good student should be. Parents also aim to create a sense of in-groupness for their children, helping them feel that they are not alone in their educational journey. A parent's educational background plays an important cognitive role in guiding a school-going child. The instructions are softened through the mental processes of schema and text world theory. Educational background and experience are crucial in shaping parents' mental processes regarding how to convey messages about school performance to their children. These cognitive and stylistic strategies enable parents to effectively guide and support their children's educational efforts, ensuring a positive and encouraging learning environment (this verifies the hypothesis raised in this study).

8. Conclusions

In this study, the researchers show the use of Text World Theory and Schema Theory to cognitive stylistics in analyzing questionnaire responses. Through the examination of the questions, this study shows how certain readers may interpret the text world and how they can use their schemas (background and personal experiences) to connect the linguistic clues found in the questions. In general, schema plays a significant role in the understanding, and mental processing of words as a meaning trigger. Moreover, text-world theory serves as a tool to assist linguists in determining how readers can comprehend the text world (questions) and the discourse world. The findings of this study highlight the cognitive and stylistic strategies employed by educated Kurdish parents when providing educational instructions to their children. The use of indirect instructional strategies, reliance on



linguistic cues, and activation of relevant schemata are all key features of their approach. By drawing on their own experiences and employing supportive and empathetic methods, parents can guide their children effectively through their educational journey. The application of Schema Theory and Text World Theory provides valuable insights into the cognitive processes underlying parental educational instructions, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding family discourse in the Kurdish context.

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Appendix



27. Parents Questionnaire
1. Kindly choose the answer that best describes the situation presented.
 - A. 1- To make your child/children start doing their homework, what would you say?
 28. Start doing your homework.
 29. Do you have homework for tomorrow?
 30. Let's do your homework.
 31. A.2- What would you say to get your child to study for an exam?
 32. You have an exam tomorrow, you need to start studying for it.
 33. Are you ready for tomorrow's exam?
 34. Study for tomorrow's exam.
 35. A.3- To make your child spend more time studying, what would you say?
 36. You need to study for two hours.
 37. When I was in school, each day, I spent two hours studying.
 38. Let's go to your room, you study and I will prepare my lectures for tomorrow.
 2. Kindly write the answer to the following questions based on your knowledge and experience.
 39. B.1 How do you advise your child to take care of his\ her school materials?
 40. B2. How do you tell your child to keep his school clothes tidy and clean in school?
 41. B3. How do you advise your child to behave with his \her teachers and friends?

