Analysis of Language Functions in Children's Classroom Discourse

Yasmin Mari Ambrosio[1], Cedra Binalet[2], Ramsey Ferrer[3], & Jin Yang[4]
[1]De La Salle-Santiago Zobel
[2]Ifugao State University
[3]De La Salle-College of St. Benilde
[4]De La Salle University-Manila
ramsey_ferrer@dlsu.edu.ph

Abstract: Previous studies in the functions and development of language in classroom discourse (Cazden, 2001; Fulk-Row, 1996; Hall, 1998; Willis, 1981; Zhang, 2008) have explained further its importance as it relates to classroom talk that occurs between teachers and students. However, the premise that the mere opportunity for social interaction and discourse will not necessary lead to learning experiences, unless serious attention is paid to the purposes that the discourse serves in particular activities and the types of interactions to which it contributes to, has not been investigated yet in the Philippine context. Informed by the proposed framework of Kumupulainen & Wray (1997) on analyzing children's classroom discourse, this study aims to identify the various functions of language among children's discourse and how these language functions are used to negotiate meaning in a social classroom interaction. Findings on the video recorded and transcribed children's classroom discourse reveal that there are categorized and uncategorized language functions that come into play. Accordingly, categorized language functions (e.g. interrogative, responsive, organization, to name a few) show that children use informative language (most predominantly) in a social interaction while the uncategorized language functions (e.g. code-switching; polite expressions; expression of sarcasm; repetition/emphasis; self-correction, to name a few) co-occur with their own intentions that may contribute to the existing language functions in children's discourse. In conclusion, results show that children's classroom discourse when paid attention leads to learning experiences through the use of various language functions that determine children's purpose in the negotiation of meaning in their talk.

Keywords: Language functions; children's talk; classroom; discourse; Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Alvin Toffler once said "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn." This concept of literacy at present introduces us to a more practical perception of learning, which is by 'doing' (Larsen – Freeman, 2010 cited in Walsh, 2011, p. 49). This notion perceives learning as a process, an activity, something we take part in, and requires performance. However, at present, learning in the classroom is significantly measured by the written outputs of the students compared to how they really process learning in the classroom. This present scenario is in contrast with van Lier's (1996:5) claim that "interaction is the most important element in the curriculum" which is supported by Ellis' (2000) assertion that "learning arises not *through* interaction, but *in* interaction" (cited in Walsh, 2011, p. 51). Furthermore, language mediates the interactions happening in the classroom. As such, it becomes a "social construct" where meaning is conveyed through "contextualized discourse between communicators" (Kumupulainen & Wray, 1997, p. 2).

Children spend a substantial amount of time learning in the classroom. Since classroom is a social context, there is an assumption that various interactions take place and students are expected to

participate "individually and publicly" (Cazden, 1988, p. 3). Furthermore, Welsh (2011) highlights that learning as a social process is "transactional" in nature (p. 63). Therefore, learning occurs through interaction with others, who are more experienced and in a position to guide and support the actions of beginners just like what happens in the classroom. In this process, learners use language as a "symbolic tool" (Welsh, 2011) to clarify and make meaning of the knowledge they are presented with during discussions (p. 63). Language is used to ask questions; spoken interactions are used both to transmit and clarify new information and then to reflect and rationalize what has been learned. Hence, classroom discourse appears as a significant mediator between and among teachers and students (Draper & Anderson, 1991; Mercer, 1995; Lyle, 1996; Wells, 1994; Wood, 1992 cited in Kumpulainen & Wray, 1997). According to Kumupulainen & Wray (1997), discourse is best described as based on contexts or situations. This description suggests that classrooms have stable discourse genres because the discussion often revolves on a controlled topic that has established a "common knowledge" between teachers and pupils (Edwards & Mercer, 1987 cited in Kumupulainen & Wray, 1997). This structure revolving in classroom discourse seems to be effective in learning because pupils are directed towards formalizing what they know and adding new concepts that will make them wonder. In line with this, students adjust their discourse depending on the activities that are implemented in the classroom and make sure they are appropriate and contextually – related to the topics being discussed. Teachers of traditional schools often execute discourse – related activities using the Initiation – Response – Feedback (IRF) approach wherein teacher directly initiates discussion by asking questions and students are expected to respond by answering the questions (Cazden, 1986, 1988; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975 cited in Kumupulainen & Wray, 1997). This strategy may be considered as the heart of establishing discourse in any context simply because a question is complemented by an answer or a response. In this way, teachers may gauge whether students are learning or are coping with the discussions. However, focusing on the IRF strategy alone may pose limitations on the various opportunities that students may experience to maximize their potentials especially in honing them to be responsible of their learning and are flexible to cope with the demands of the continuously changing society.

Trying to emphasize on learning by 'doing,' may give researchers the opportunity to study, analyze and evaluate the children's discourse in the classroom. This instance is in agreement with what Ellis (2000) and Pekarek Doehler (2010) purports that "studying interaction is the same thing as

studying learning" (cited in Welsh, 2011, p. 50). Furthermore, Cazden (1988) suggests that the study of classroom discourse is the study of communication system. He asserts that spoken language is the medium by which much teaching takes place and students demonstrate how much they have learned by sharing their experiences and responding to questions. Also, Cazden (1988) highlights that most of the classrooms comprises of students with diverse linguistic backgrounds. As such, conversations occurring in the classroom may provide a good opportunity to investigate on how well learners use language to convey meanings and relate successfully to their peers and teachers (New & Cochran, 2007)

This paper aims to respond to the premise made by Kumupulainen & Wray (1997) that the mere opportunity for social interaction and discourse will not necessary lead to learning experiences, unless serious attention is paid to the purposes the discourse serves in particular activities and the types of interactions to which it contributes to. Thus, this paper aims to identify the various functions of language among children's discourse in the classroom using the proposed framework of Kumupulainen & Wray (1997). Specifically, this study intends to answer the following questions:

1. What are the functions of children's discourse in the classroom?

2. What is the most preponderant function of language in children's classroom discourse?

1.1 Review of Related Studies

Looking at the idea that much learning takes place through interaction, this study is grounded on the rationale that children benefit from interacting with peers. According to Britton (1982), they learn from each other and with each other (cited in Tolentino, 2004, p. 29). Such instances are commonly observed on literacy events. Literacy events are periods in the classroom where children discuss, collaborate, or talk about things while they are reading books and/or writing something (Heath, 1982 cited in Tolentino, 2004). Hence, through children's classroom discourse, they use language to construct meaning and be able to accomplish the task at hand which leads the researchers to explore on the significant variables of the study.

1.1.1 Children's Classroom Discourse

A variety of approaches, perspectives, purposes and procedures now exist in the field of second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) classroom interaction research (Willis, 1981) in. Previous studies in the functions and development of language in classroom discourse (Cazden, 2001; Fulk-Row, 1996; Hall, 1998; Willis, 1981; Zhang, 2008) have explained further its importance as it relates to classroom talk that occurs between teachers and students. The classroom discourse further facilitates

student learning. For example, in her study, Zhang (2008) concluded that the quality of student learning is closely associated with the quality of classroom discourse. Moreover, the interactive activities that teachers prepare are important, since student participation and successful task may be facilitated during these exchanges (Hall, 1998). Therefore a classroom must be a place where discussion and collaboration are encouraged even if the classroom discourse has traditional or non-traditional lessons. To explain further, Wells (1999 as cited in Zhang, 2008) stated that traditional lessons refer to the using of a three-part sequence: teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation or follow-up (IRE, IRF). Non-traditional lessons, on the other hand, means the sequence of talk in classrooms does not fit an IRE structure on account of a changed educational goal (Cazden, 2001:31).

Cazden (2001) emphasized one condition essential to education: to communicate, to understand and to be understood. In order to keep this condition constant, according to Cazden, the size of group, medium of instruction, participants, variation in discourse structure are necessary.

Cazden (2001) examines features of classroom discourse that teachers and researchers might want to examine or change like turn-taking practices: teacher nomination, student self-selection, as well as such practices as requiring students to call on peers of the opposite gender, passing a "talking stick," or affirming overlapping speech.

The method used in Robbin's (2007) study, with its two-levels of analysis – using Rogoff's three foci and aspects of Vygotsky's ideas – provides a useful way for considering how young children's ideas about the world develop, and reveals that their thinking is often complex and powerful. In the early stages of each of the conversations it was quite clear that the children were using direct remembering, recalling the concepts and ideas from shared family understandings, as well as their previous experiences. Robbins (2007) argued, however, that with the addition of drawing into the research activity, for *some* children, their thinking moved more toward mediated remembering.

On the other hand, an alternative way of looking at learners' speech act performance in context is through the application of Halliday's (1975 as cited in Llinares & Pastrana, 2012) functional taxonomy of child language, a model which is particularly useful in the analysis of communicative functions in context. Halliday (1975) identified different phases. In the first phase, the child used his communicative system to satisfy certain immediate needs. In the second phase, the child's utterances were related to the world surrounding the child and these were found to convey two macrofunctions: the mathetic macrofunction, used to learn about the world, and the pragmatic macrofunction, related with

participation in and interaction with the world. The mathetic macrofunction includes the heuristic function (used to enquire about the world), the informative function (used to inform) and the personal function (used to refer to personal issues). The pragmatic macrofunction includes the regulatory function (used to ask other people to perform actions) and the instrumental function (used to ask others to perform an action for one's own benefit).

Finally, different work on classroom interaction focused on patterns of discourse through coding teacher utterances (e.g., Bellack, 1966; Flanders, 1970; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) as cited in Willis, 1981. They revealed that classroom talk was structured and hence could be categorized and analyzed. While researchers working with language and classroom discourse do not have the same view on different frameworks, they agree that understanding classroom language use can be seen and practiced through verbal exchanges and spoken discourse.

1.1.2 Functions of Language in the Classroom

According to Halliday (1973), a functional approach to language means investigating how language is used and finding out the purposes that language serves us best and how we achieve these purposes using the four macro skills namely: speaking and listening, reading and writing (p. 7). In classrooms characterized by teacher research, the use of transcripts on small – group dialogues and children's reasoning in problem – solving tasks help teachers understand how students construct meaning by sharing their knowledge (Gallas, 1995 cited in New & Cochran, 2007). Blank (1974) explored on the cognitive functions of language in pre – school children. The study highlights the areas on three cognitive functions of language namely: as tool for concept formation, communication, and problem solving. Blank (1974) explained that language as a means to achieve concept formation does not guarantee an accurate learning of the concept. Moreover, it is synthesized that very young children are not really capable of understanding several words to facilitate their understanding of the concept (Piaget, 1960 cited in Blank, 1974, p. 231), but verbalizing or using language to facilitate learning is advantageous on the part of the child because there seems to be an association of the label and the illustration (Kuenne, 1946 in Blank, 1974, p. 231). McNeil (1966 cited in Blank, 1974) tested communication among young children with the assumption that communication emphasizes comprehension rather than language production. In the study, results show that children under age of four experienced a significant difficulty compared to children who were four years old and older given that the referents were highly familiar to them and labels were included. Verbal and nonverbal cues were also

used to find out whether the power of language affects the child's functioning.

In Luria's (1960, 1961) study, he asked a child to find certain objects using verbal and nonverbal cues. He concluded that the child's success of locating the objects is greater when nonverbal cues were provided compared to verbal cues. However, nonverbal cues alone do not facilitate this high success rate. The child's ability to discriminate objects visually has led them to associate the nonverbal cues and the task. In fact, Vygotsky (1962) points out that *"words, at first, are conventional substitutes for the gesture...the only correct translation...of any early words, is the pointing gesture"* (cited in Blank, 1972, p. 237). However, Blank (1974) advices that children will innately discover that the use of nonverbal cues to communicate is limited because it is restricted with the presence of visual representations which strengthens the transmission of instruction using nonverbal cues. Hence, the child will innately discover that he needs to verbalize language to communicate when he realize that he cannot use nonverbal cues to be understood. Finally, when children use language for problem solving, they are practicing to achieve mastery of the verbal system (Blank, 1974, p. 240). Researchers Schlesinger (1971) and Bloom (1970) suggests that the cognitive ability of the child has a great impact on how he perceives things. This is evident on Bloom's analysis of the speech production of three infants wherein he stated that basic grammatical structures among very young learners are "developmentally progressive" in nature and that it highly depends on children's experiences that are highly structured to be used in problem solving (cited in Blank, 1974).

In a dissertation conducted by Tolentino (2004), she investigated on the children's talk in the classroom paying close attention on what emergent readers and writers talk about, the roles and participations they portray and the functions of language when emergent readers and writers are engaged in talk. The study was grounded on both premises that children construct meaning through language (Halliday, 1989 cited in Tolentino, 2004) and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1986 cited in Tolention, p. 5). Relevant discussions related to our study are the topics being talked about and the functions of language when the participants are engaged in talk. Results on what the pre – kindergarten talk about during reading events reveal that majority or 73.5% talk about the content of the text, 23.1 talk about topics beyond the text (off – topic) and only 3.4% talk about the conventions of the text. The data highlights that majority of the participants were talking about the illustrations or pictures of a print source as they read together. Such indicators include sharing of feelings and/or personal experiences about the animals mentioned in the text

and labeling or identifying pictures they see in the text and. Furthermore, it was observed that there were incidents wherein children's topic appear unrelated to the text itself because of the following manifestations: seeking to address certain behaviors during the interaction, share ideas, suggestions, plans and giving reminders that proper care should be given to the materials as they use it. Finally, the children minimally talked about the conventions of the text specifically inferred from the discourse of the participants that they should read the words in the text to know what the book might be about, demonstrating knowledge on the spelling of words as well as locating the parts of a book (front and back) or the story (first and last parts).

On the other hand, the writing literacy event revealed three topics being talked about when children are engaged into writing to accomplish tasks (e.g. book writing, making a list, or illustrating concepts). The data extracted the following results: 50.3% talk about content, 39.8% talk about conventions of a text, and 9.9% talk beyond text. It is clear that the results tell us that participants tend to talk about what they are writing and how they are writing it. Indicators such as talking about the elements of the story and their personal experiences to write the story is greatly manifested by the participants yielding to a much higher percentage on talking mostly about content.

The functions of language were also identified in this study with the premise that children acquire meaning when they engage with others in relation to reading and writing literacy events. Using Halliday's (1978) functions of language, Tolentino (2004) identified the occurrence of the functions in two separate literacy events (i.e. reading and writing). During the reading literacy event, all seven functions of language (Halliday, 1978) such as Informative, Interactional, Instrumental, Regulatory, Personal and Heuristic occurred. However, the informative function appeared as most preponderant function because children usually get information from various sources (e.g. parents, caregivers, teachers, books, media) which adds up to their schema and may be used as contribution when necessary during engagements with others. Furthermore, the informative function also serves as a clarification among the participants in terms of facts that they encounter during reading events.

Similarly, all functions of language occurred in the writing literacy events highlighting the proximal emergence of interactional and instrumental functions of language. This is because the participants interact with their peers when they share ideas; collaborate on how they will accomplish their task and use language to maintain conversation. Instrumental appeared as one of the

preponderant functions because of its relation to satisfying one's need. According to Tolentino (2004), sharing of information satisfies a participant's need. Specifically, indicators under this function are expressing a point of view, sharing one's work with others, utilizing strategies to accomplish tasks, utilizing print resources, consulting peers and consulting a teacher.

Hence, it is observed that when children participate in classroom discourse, their ability to construct meaning varies on the topic which they are engaged in. However, such participation enables them to use various language strategies to clarify understanding, share information or personal experiences which yield to the identification of purposes or functions of language.

1.1.3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of this present study is largely based on the socio-cultural, communicative perspective in which children's utterances are socially constructed and learned in discourse. Socio-cultural theory describes children's learning as a social process and the origination of children's intelligence in society or culture (Vygotzky, 1978). Primarily, this theory postulates that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of children's cognition.

Classroom discourse, in particular, is considered a diverse setting that encourages children's collaboration, problem solving and knowledge building (Fourlas, 1988; Fourlas & Wray, 1990; Kumpulainen, 1994a, 1994b, in press; Rogers, 1996 as cited in Kumupulainen & Wray, 1997). Therefore, socio-cultural setting in a discourse interaction largely affects socio-cognition vis-à-vis the development of children's learning and maturity.

Anchored on the socio-cognitive theory, this study adopts the proposed framework of Kumpulainen and Wray (1997). Theoretically grounded by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Weber (1990) on the content analysis, this framework is formulated in order to account for analyzing language functions and their significance to children's classroom discourse. Children's utterance which is the unit of analysis is taken into consideration to further investigate the most preponderant function of language that determines its communicative values to classroom discourse. The framework consists of 16 functional categories as shown below:

Table 1: The Functional Analysis of Children's Classroom Talk (FACCT)

FUNCTION	CODE	DESCRIPTION
Informative	(I)	Providing information, from previous ideas, pre – existing knowledge, by manipulating information resources, or from the situational context
Interrogative	(Q)	Asking questions in order to get information or social approval
Responsive	®	Answering questions
Organisational	(OR)	Organizing and controlling behavior
Judgemental	(J)	Expressing agreement or disagreement
Argumentational	(ARG)	Reasoning in language
Compositional	(C)	Creating written or spoken text not earlier mentioned, revising or dictating
Reproductional	(RP)	Reproducing previously encountered language either by reading or repeating
Experiential	(E)	Expressing personal experiences
Expositional	(EXPO)	Language accompanying the demonstration of a phenomenon
Hypothetical	(HY)	Putting forward a hypothesis
External thinking	(ET)	Thinking aloud in accompaniment of a task
Imaginative	(IM)	Introducing or expressing imaginative situations
Heuristic	(HE)	Expressing discovery
Affectional	(AF)	Expression of personal feelings
Intentional	(IN)	Signaling intention to participate in discourse

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive research design, a type of non – experimental design. Descriptive research is most appropriate to use because the study focuses on identifying and describing the functions of language in children's classroom discourse (Kumupulainen & Wray, 1997). The subjects of the study were the grade 2 students. The class is composed of 17 boys and 15 girls with a Mean age of 7.03. The languages these students use at home vary. There were 14 pupils who speak both English and Filipino at home; 11 speak English only; 6 speak Filipino; and 1 speaks English, Filipino and French simultaneously. All students in the class speaks well versed English throughout each school day except during Filipino classes. The data were collected through video recording of prompted children's classroom discourse. The researchers implemented activities that were aligned with the characteristics of Literacy Event as described by Heath (1980) and Anderson, Teale, and Estrada

(1980) in the study of Tolentino (2004). Specifically, the activities implemented were to draw an ethnic group based on the descriptions that were discussed in class and to draw and explain the best things that happened in their grade two year. While the children were on task, the researchers made use of digital devices such as a tablet and a digital camera to record the children's discourse that transpired in each group. Lastly, the data gathered were viewed, selected and were reduced to 14 from 15 videos due to file corruption. Finally, the recordings were transcribed following the transcription conventions proposed by Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974 in Coates, 1998).

After conducting the video recording, the researchers chose some talk samples that were utilized in the study. The researchers based the students' activities on the literacy event as defined and described in Tolentino (2004)'s paper.

The chosen talk samples were transcribed following the transcription conventions proposed by Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974 in Coates, 1998). Furthermore, the data were analyzed considering one utterance as basic unit of count. Utterance unit is suitable in this study because the study focuses on the construction of knowledge in the classroom wherein constructivists emphasizes on the quality, rather than the quantity of talk. In addition, the utterances were analyzed, coded and categorized under its most appropriate function from the 16 functions of language (Kumupulainen & Wray, 1997). Also, the utterances were tallied and converted to percentages. Finally, the breakdown of the occurrence of the functions of language was presented in graphical representations in the results part of this paper.

The first stage of analysis involved viewing and listening to the children's talk. The second stage involved a process of transcribing in which all the researchers take turn in coding, rereading, and revisiting the video to account for its reliability. A transcription system is used to enable the researchers to analyze the conceptual content of the utterances that indicate the functions of language in children's talk. The third stage involved coding of the language functions in children's discourse based on the functions and descriptions summarized by Kumpulainen and Wray (1997) in Table 1.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. The Functional Analysis of Children's Classroom Talk (FACCT)

FUNCTION	CODE	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Informative	(I)	59	21
Interrogative	(Q)	27	9
Responsive	(R)	25	8
Organisational	(OR)	39	14
Judgemental	(J)	17	6
Argumentational	(ARG)	2	1
Compositional	(C)	2	1
Reproductional	(RP)	6	2
Experiential	(E)	24	8
Expositional	(EXPO)	2	1
Hypothetical	(HY)	0	0
External thinking	(ET)	6	2
Imaginative	(IM)	2	1
Heuristic	(HE)	0	0
Affectional	(AF)	36	13
Intentional	(IN)	11	4
Uncategorize	(UN)	27	9
Total	**NA**	**285**	**100**

As shown in Table 2, it summarizes the frequency and distribution of language functions in children's classroom talk. The results revealed that the children's spoken discourse are distributed in almost all the different functional categories of language (Informative, Interrogative, Responsive, Organisational, Judgemental, Argumentational, Compositional, Reproductional, Experiential, Expositional, External thinking, Imaginative, Affectional, and Intentional) except two language functions (Hypothetical and Heuristic). Also, it is evident in the result that children tend to use Informative in their conversations. One possible reason for this is that children express and communicate ideas based on previous knowledge learned from home, school and community. It can be pointed out that most classroom talk creates more opportunity and flexibility for students to develop communicative and speaking skills through sharing information. On the other hand, Hypothetical and Heuristic functional categories are not evident in children's classroom talk probably because the focus of the activities are on drawing and narrating (discussing) their best experience in grade 2 base on literacy events. Making inferences and discovering something new cannot be drawn from the said activity.

Table 3. Uncategorized Language Functions

	Utterances
Expression	Booom, arghhrrrr, hahahah
	You see just ahh
	Hey!
Filler	Ahhhhhmmmmm
Code-switching	*Para* you do two each
	SI Pauline **naman** si
	Pauline **naman**
	Please? Im gonna tell it to teacher na
	Nagdrawing ka na nga eh
	Ako, im just going to draw the music
Polite Expression	Excuse me please
	Excuse me excuse me
Introductory phrase	This is our …this is our…
Repetition/Emphasis	We chose art because we all [we all] had fun making the [the] artworks that has the names on it
Self-correction	The best thing that happened in school for us
Turn-taking	Billie it's your turn
Expression of sarcsm	So…

The result of this present study signifies the different language functions that occur in children's classroom discourse. As the data reveal, these functions of language transpire vis-à-vis their communicative intentions in which children are able to demonstrate within the context of work time. Although these roles of children's language are apparent in the current situation, there are still other functions that co-occur with their own intentions which the researchers have also given emphasis on that may contribute to the existing language functions in children's discourse. One possible explanation of this emergence is that the use of different language functions may have something to do with a number of factors (Tolentino, 2004) such as the nature of the activity; the nature of materials present within the context; the participants' intent; the roles they play as they interact with others; and their degree of confidence in what they know about this language. The analyses of data have led the researchers to elucidate a few many ways that emerged in which children are using particular functions. Concomitantly, some aspects of language functions that co-occurred in this study are labelled 'uncategorized' which the researchers gave explanation later in order to determine their reliability to the immediate situation. These uncategorized items are given specifications for which they are either contextually related or unrelated (e.g. fillers,

expressions, repetitions, etc.). Both the investigated functions and the 'uncategorized' functions of language are delineated under the two parts of this discussion. The first part discusses the different language functions that significantly reveal qualitative relations to earlier studies while the second part elaborates the 'uncategorized' functions that the researchers deemed may contribute to the growing sophistication of language functions in children's discourse. In addition, the most preponderant language functions is divulged in part 1 which can be considered implicative in identifying what the children frequently talk about and in understanding why they talk about it at most. They are the *informative*, *organizational*, *affectional*, *interrogative*, and *responsive*. Likewise, other functions are discussed in no particular order such as the *experiential*, *judgmental*, *external thinking*, *reproductional*, *argumentational*, *compositional*, *imaginative*, and *expositional.* On the other hand, uncategorized language functions are perseveringly explicated in order to account for other features that may have been utilized in children's classroom discourse. Finally, the underlying interpretations of other language functions are presented in no particular order.

3.1   Language   Functions   in   Children's Classroom Discourse
This   study   has   examined   the communicative functions of language within the context of children's classroom discourse. One of the highlights in this study reveals significant relations to Tolentino's study (2004) which preponderantly shows that children's talk is described as informative in nature (Halliday, 1989). Primarily, children use language in order to share facts; verify information; introduce a concept; as well as expand and extend the knowledge of others (Tolentino, 2004). The prior knowledge of the children which is generated in the current situation plays an important role in the realization of this function. As analyzed in this study, children share facts as far as how they have comprehensively understood the input fed to them. This is highly evident to the part in which they are able to allocate certain language appropriations towards the object being described in a task (e.g. describing Aetas). It is worth emphasizing however that the ability of the children to share such information

may have been confirmed by the other participants in order to ensure that they have common understanding at present. This occurrence even extends to children's opening of a new idea that may be related to the topic or may just be an expanded thought of other participants. Interestingly, this language phenomenon theoretically grounds the findings of the present study which yield the importance of knowledge and exchange of information in modern classroom discourse as emphasized by Kumupulainen and Wray (1997). In this sense, knowledge and information are socially constructed when children use language in an interaction (Halliday, 1989 in Tolentino, 2004) which may be constrained by different factors such as language environment and resources (Kumupulainen & Wray, 1997). In the light of this constraint, it can be argued that a learning environment that is rich with various resources is found to be adequate in the children's exchange of knowledge and information through interaction.

Using the organizational function of language, children are able to manage and control their peer's or their own behavior. This is evident when children strategize or device some ways to monitor their own activities through verbal expressions and possibly through their own cognitive functioning. This language phenomenon coincides with the two functions of Tolentino's study (2004). First is the instrumental language, and second is the regulatory function. Organizational function seems to be associated with instrumental language that children use in expressing their point of view as they share their work with others; and develop and utilize strategies and labelling, sounding out letters, drawing the target object (e.g. mountain, lavas, Aetas), consulting peers and their teachers (Tolentino, 2004). Apparently, the regulatory function shares the same role of organizational language that children use in controlling the behavior of others; ensuring order; imposing rules; and giving instructions as they engage in drawing exploration part. This association of language functions clearly indicates that young children are capable of using language in drawing activities through self-regulatory (Tolentino, 1997) which demonstrates their own responsibilities and of others.

Children use affectional function of language in order to express their personal feeling. This use of language transpires in the study conducted by Kumupulainen and Wray (1997), but minimally occurs in Tolentino's (2004) identified function. However, this present study has revealed a significant association between affectional function and personal function of language as it is expressed by the children. It can be argued in this study that the children's use of personal function is largely affected by affectional language. This means that children use this language in order to share experiences that have impact on their lives. Such experiences may have made them satisfied that they are able to share with other children.

A similar occurrence between the interrogative and responsive functions of language has yielded interesting accounts for which they serve their purpose. In the study of Tolentino (2004), she argues that emergent readers and writers tend to provide more information than pose questions. However, this study reveals that children give equal opportunities for each other to give questions and answers in an interaction. This language occurrence simply puts forward the importance of turn-taking in a speech event as espoused by Yule (2006). Moreover, children are aware of their own chances of speaking through give and take language procedures.

3.2 Uncategorized Language Functions

Surprisingly, this paper has revealed other language functions that co-occur with their own intentions that may contribute to the existing language functions in children's discourse. These are (1) codeswitching; (2) polite expressions; (3) expression of sarcasm; (4) repetition/emphasis; (5) self-correction; (6) introductory statement; (7) expression (8) turn-taking; (9) filler. Although these functions minimally occur in this present study and do not fall under the categorization of language functions of Halliday (1972) and Kumupulainen and Wray (1997), it can be argued that they play a significant role in children's classroom discourse.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that the quality of children's learning is closely associated with the quality of classroom discourse. Thus, teachers should include more activities that prompt child – to – child discussions because children will gain more exposure to various contexts of discourse thereby providing more opportunities for them to strategize on sustaining the conversation and construct meaning out of it. In addition, they will have more opportunities to experience different roles depending on the context of the discourse.

Also, it is worth mentioning that this study paved way for the identification of some utterances of children which do not belong to the 16 language functions which were suggested by Kumupulainen & Wray (1997). The new language functions are the following: Onomatopoeic expressions, Code – switching, Polite expressions, Expressions, Expression of sarcasm, Repetition for Emphasis, Turn - taking, and Self – correction. A table with the sample utterances under this uncategorized category is included in the appendices.

With the emergence of these additional functions of language, we suggest that future researchers may consider looking at the indicators which yielded to the occurrence of these new functions of language in children's classroom discourse.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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