
COMMUNICATIVE ACTS AND PHONOLOGICAL PROCESSES OF MALE CHILDREN AT FREE PLAY

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Abstract

This study was conducted to explain the communicative acts and phonological processes of Cebuano-English speaking children in interacting with their parent during free play, using video-tape recorder. It is a qualitative and quantitative method of the 4 male Cebuano- English speaking children aged 4 years old residing in Palompon, Leyte by using the video-recorded data upon observing the selected children during free play. The research result showed that the most occurring communicative acts were obliging and control acts. Also the most dominant phonological processes of children were stopping, consonant cluster reduction, and gliding.

Keywords: *communicative acts, phonological processes, play*

Abstrak

Kajian ini diadakan untuk meneliti tindakan komunikatif dan proses fonologi anak-anak yang berbicara bahasa Inggris-Cebuano dalam berinteraksi dengan orang tua mereka selama bermain menggunakan video-tape recorder. Kajian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan kuantitatif dari 4 anak laki-laki yang berbicara bahasa Inggris-Cebuano yang berusia 4 tahun yang bertempat tinggal di Palompon, Leyte dengan menggunakan data rekaman video untuk mengobservasi anak-anak yang telah dipilih saat sedang bermain. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindak komunikasi yang paling banyak terjadi adalah tindak memerintah dan mengontrol. Untuk proses fonologi yang paling dominan dari komunikasi anak-anak tersebut adalah penghentian, pengurangan kelompok konsonan dan setengah vokal.

Kata kunci: *tindak komunikasi, proses fonologi, permainan*

1. Introduction

Play is described as “an absorbing activity in which young children participate with enthusiasm....” (Scales et al., 1991 in Santer et al., 2007, p.54). In addition, play is a spontaneous and freely chosen activity which implies no boundaries. It is usually used to describe the activities of children from babyhood until the early teenage years. Free play is also described by England (2006 in Santer et al., 2007) as “children choosing what they want to do, how they want to do it and when to stop and try something else.... (p. 12). Free play has no external goals set by adults and has no adult imposed curriculum. Although adults usually provide the space and resources for free play and might be involved, the child takes the lead and the adults respond to cues from the child. . . .” (England, 2006 in Santer et al., 2007, p.12).

When children play, they tend to use communicative acts towards their parent or peers.

Communicative acts are the use of language to perform some acts. Penman (1980 in Leaper, 1991) categorized communicative acts as follows: collaborative, control, obliging, and withdrawing. Communicative acts are utterances by children in which they reveal their communicative interest.

Concerning the phonological processes, Hoff-Ginsberg (2009) argued that phonological processes are systematic ways in which children alter sounds of the target language so that they can fit within the repertoire of sounds they can produce. According to Hoff-Ginsberg (2001), there are six types of phonological processes, namely, weak syllable deletion, final consonant deletion, reduplication, consonant harmony, consonant cluster reduction, velar fronting, stopping, and gliding. There have been many researchers such as Rychkebusch & Marcos (2004), Maxilom (2007), and Suzuki (2011), whose studies only focused on communicative acts of children in different context while Maxilom (2003) and Rajan (2009) are among the few, who studied child's phonological processes in natural and controlled setting, respectively. In the present study, the researcher combined communicative acts and phonological processes of Penman (1980 in Leaper, 1991) and Hoff-Ginsberg (2001) which were not studied by the researchers mentioned above. This study also analyzed how these two frameworks are applied among children aged 4 years old in Palompon, Leyte at free play. Consequently, the lack of empirical studies involving communicative acts and phonological processes has encouraged and motivated the researcher to conduct this present study.

1.1. Communicative Acts

Communicative acts are defined as a set of utterances that children use to perform some sort of linguistic action or function in communication. The classification of communicative acts based on the psychosocial processes coding scheme (PPCS) of Penman (1980 in Leaper, 1991) was used in this study. These acts are: collaborative, control, obliging, and withdrawing. The psychosocial processes coding scheme of Leaper (1991) was actually derived from Penman's (1980) coding categories.

The two levels of the two dimensions create four main categories of communicative acts. Penman (1980, in Leaper, 1991) describes each category as follows: collaborative acts are high on both influence and involvement; they directly influence the consultation exchange and they are affiliative in nature. Collaborative acts include (a) making an initiation that invites the other to move closer;(b) exploring a situation by informing, making suggestion, or approaching a task;(c) mutually affirming self and other through acceptance; and (d) contributing constructively to the interaction by affirming, cooperating with, or expanding upon the other's action (Leaper, 1991, p.801-802).

Control acts are high on influence and low on involvement. These acts directly influence the interaction, however, they serve to cause distance among participants in consultation. These

communicative acts include the following statements: (a) rejecting the other through denigration or display of hostility; (b) taking over the interaction by ordering, manipulating or challenging; (c) countering the other by defiance, refutation, or disruption; and (d) resisting the other by defending one's position, showing scepticism, or questioning as a way of non-acceptance (Leaper, 1991, p.802).

Obliging acts are low on influence and high on involvement. These do not directly influence the direction in consultation and they are intended to preserve the social relation in an affiliative way. These acts include the following: (a) seeking involvement from other by requesting information, action, or confirmation, or by allowing others to start; (b) going along with other by willingly accepting the others' proposal; and (d) dependently merging with the other by fully accepting or seeking manipulation (Leaper, 1991, p.802).

Withdrawing acts are low on both influence and involvement; they do not directly influence the consultation exchange and they have the intent of distancing participants in consultation. Withdrawing speech acts include: (a) evading the other by not responding, changing the topic or being vague; (b) abstaining from participation by being indecisive or using delaying; (c) abandoning one's position by unwillingly allowing the other to take over or showing the other to take over or showing sudden disinterest; silences longer than three seconds were considered unresponsive and were typical tactics counted in this category (Leaper, 1991, p.802). Table shows the types of communicative acts.

Table 1. Communicative Acts

TWO-DIMENSIONAL ARRANGEMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL PROCESSES CODING SCHEME WITH DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES			
INFLUENCE	Direct	CONTROL	COLLABORATE
			<i>Rejecting the other</i> (" You jerk") <i>Commanding the other</i> (" Don't do that") <i>Countering the other</i> ("That's not right") <i>Resisting the other</i>

	("Why not?")	(" This is a puppet")
Nondirect	WITHDRAW	OBLIGE
	<i>Evading the other</i> (" What's that noise?")	<i>Going along with the other</i> ("Sue, let's do that")
	<i>Delaying participation</i> ("Uh,um,um")	<i>Request action or information</i> ("What do you want to do?")
	<i>Reluctant submission</i> ("I don't care")	<i>Willing submission</i> ("Never mind, let's do that")
	<i>Nonparticipation</i> (a long silence)	<i>Seeking support</i> ("I need your help")
	Distancing	Affiliative
I N V O L V E M E N T		

(Source: Penman 1980, in Leaper, 1991, p. 799)

The reviewed studies mainly focused on interactions between children and their parents and children and their peers. Most of these studies chose a context of play where the interaction was video-tape recorded. The study of Rychkebusch and Marcos (2004) was about the child to parent interaction (i.e. father or mother) where two sets of toys were used for their free play. The results show that around one year and five months old, the children's parents' genders had a significant influence on the production of directives and assertives. The study mentioned above is related to this study because it attempted to show pragmatic development among young children on interacting with their parents through their speech acts.

Maxilom's (2007) study also attempted to describe and analyze the communicative acts of Cebuano-speaking children at free play where the participants in her study were two siblings aged three to four years old. The findings show that the common communicative acts performed by both participants were emotive, control, and informing acts. However, the speech of the older sibling showed evidence of obliging act. On the other hand, this present study used video camera in recording children's interactions, the participants in this study were four Cebuano-English speaking male children aged 4 years old who already attend schooling.

With regard to Suzuki (2011), a qualitative research method was used to examine six children aged eight to ten years old. Role play in a doll (as a mock friend) was chosen instead of asking the children to interact with their peers or adults. The imaginary situations and the target speech acts were

instructed by the research with the hint of how to perform them when they have the problem of doing so. The findings revealed that positive strategies were adopted in that people in different ages follow general rules for performing speech acts. Hence, play is used as a context in exploring communicative acts among children as demonstrated in the reviewed studies.

1.2. Phonological Processes

Phonological processes, as stated by Smit (2004), are statements about regularities in the child's phonology as compared with adult forms. Hoff-Ginsberg (2001) categorized the phonological processes into two parts. These include *whole word processes* and segment *substitution processes*. The whole word processes include the following: (a) *syllable deletion* is the process where the child omits an unstressed syllable in the target word; (b) *final consonant deletion* is the omission of the final consonant in the target word. The deletion particularly in word final consonants is very common in children's early speech; (c) *reduplication* where the child produces two identical syllables based on one of the syllables in the target word.

These are the following examples:

Weak Syllable deletion

Banana as /nænæ/

Butterfly as /b^faI/

(Hoff-Ginsberg, 2001, p.126)

Final consonant deletion

Because as /pik^/

Thought as /fɔI/

(Hoff-Ginsberg, 2001, p.126)

Reduplication

Hello /jojo/

Sesame Street as /si:si/

Bottle as /baba/

(Hoff-Ginsberg, 2001, p.126)

Consonant harmony

Duck as /g[^]k/

Tub as /b[^]/

(Hoff-Ginsberg, 2001, p.126)

Consonant cluster reduction

Cracker as /kæk/

Spider as /paider/

(Hoff-Ginsberg, 2001, p.127)

Furthermore, *segment substitution processes* involves the substitution of one phoneme sized unit for another. Segment substitution includes (a) velar fronting where the velar is replaced by an alveolar or dental; (b) stopping where a fricative /s, z, f, v, th, sh, zh/ is replaced by stops /p, b, t, d, g/; (c) gliding is a substitution process where a liquid /r & l/ is replaced by glide a /w & y/ (Hoff-Ginsber, 2001).

Velar fronting

Key as /ti/

Gun as /d[^]n/

Goat as /dot/

(Hoff-Ginsberg, 2001, p.127)

Stopping

Sea as /ti/

Face as /pace/

Cheer as /teer/

(Hoff-Ginsberg, 2001, p.127)

Gliding

Rabbit as /waæbit/

Four as /fɔI/

Right as /wait/

(Hoff-Ginsberg, 2001, p.127)

In sum, the whole word processes are characteristics of children aged 3 to 4 years old than other children. On the contrary, in normally developing children, some of the segment substitution processes persist into the early school years (Vihman, 1988 in Hoff-Ginsberg 2009, p. 127).

The studies mentioned below mainly focused on the acquired phonological processes based on children's utterances. In Maxilom's (2003) study, she analyzed the phonological features including vowels, consonants, and phonological processes. The interactions of the children to their parents and yayas were tape-recorded during the observation. The study showed that reduplication was the dominant phonological process used by children. The study has also found newly-defined phonological processes. These are the *syllable retention* (i.e. the last syllable is produced), *vowel substitution* (i.e. a vowel replaces a schwa), *final syllable deletion* (i.e. the last syllable is omitted), and the *initial consonant substitution* (i.e. the consonant in the first syllable is replaced by another consonant). Maxilom's (2003) study is related to the present study because it identified the phonological processes of the child that were included in the phonological features that Maxilom (2003) presented.

Furthermore, Rajan's (2009) study dealt with the participants who were, 3-5 and 4-5 English-speaking Indian child. Picture articulation test was used for the data collection. Results showed that the most commonly uttered phonological processes were cluster reduction, final consonant deletion, strident deletion, and assimilation. Studies revealed that there were different phonological processes occurring in the age group of three to four and four-to-five years old. Consequently, these studies provided evidence of that the children undergo the phonological processes depending on their age. The absence of the video recorder as the research tool and the lack of local studies on the children's communicative acts and phonological processes motivated the researchers to conduct this present study.

This study aimed to describe and analyze the communicative acts and phonological processes of Cebuano-English speaking male children aged 4 years old. Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions: (i) What are the communicative acts performed by children based on Penman (1980 in Leaper, 1991) in interacting with their parent? (ii) What are the phonological processes occurred in the utterances of children based on Hoff-Ginsberg (2001)?

2. Method

A descriptive approach was used in this study as it sought to identify, describe, and analyze the communicative acts and phonological processes of male children in Palompon Leyte. In this study, the communicative acts and the phonological processes performed and uttered by children were transcribed, coded, analyzed, and interpreted. The observation was conducted inside the participants' house during free play. The video recording was conducted in the room where the participants usually played. The

participants in this study were four Cebuano-English speaking children aged four years old residing in Palompon, Leyte. These are the criteria in selecting the participants: they should all have started schooling and they should speak both English and Cebuano languages. The main research tool that was used in this study was video tape recorder. This was used in recording the interactions of children with their parent's during free play. Questionnaires were given to the parents for the details of their profile. Observation guides were prepared to code the communicative acts and the phonological processes uttered by the children.

This study used a purposive sampling technique. First, the parents were given transmittal letters to formally ask their permission for the researcher to observe their children. Second, questionnaires were distributed to the parents for the details of their profile. Third, there were schedules for the actual recording and observation. Fourth were the video-recording and observation proper. The researcher allotted a total of 30 minutes in recording each participant. Moreover, she conducted two sets in recording the parent-child conversation. In the first set, 15 minutes were intended for the participants only. So, the parents were responsible for recording their interactions with their child. In the second set, the remaining 15 minutes was used to record and observe the conversation between the child and his parent during free play. Fifth, the data were transcribed and analyzed with the help of two trained inter-raters. Lastly, the transcribed data were analyzed and categorized according to the frameworks of Penman (1985 in Leaper, 1991) and Hoff-Ginsberg (2001).

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the key findings of the communicative acts and phonological processes evident in the children's speech.

Communicative Acts

Table 2. Communicative Acts of Children at Free Play

Communicative Acts	Frequency
Obliging	48
Control	37
Collaborative	32
Withdrawing	28

Other findings	10
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Total	155
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Table 1 shows that among the communicative acts, obliging, control and collaborative are the most prevalent acts of the bilingual male children aged 4 years old.

Obliging Act

Obliging is the most prevalent among the communicative acts (48). Based on this study, children were used to asking questions such ‘why’ and ‘where’ in which they sought information from the person they were actually conversing by obliging the interlocutor to answer their questions. French and Woll (1981 in Garton and Pratt, 1989) believed that this is a strategy in which children first learned child-like strategies for conversation and the use of the question form is an acceptable way for a child to initiate a conversation. This is the following example:

(1) Please hold it. (C1L184)

Control Act

The control act is also frequently used. The majority of the participants in this study were manipulative. Considering the account that they were all boys, they controlled and dominated the conversation. Moreover, they often shout violent words defying other’s opinion for others could not contribute to the conversation. Johnson, Christie and Yawkey (1999 in Maxilom, 2007) pointed out that boys tend to be dominant. The example is as follows:

(2) Stupid kid! Ungo man to! (C4L31)

Collaborative Act

The third prevalent is collaborative act. Children at this age are engaging in a real conversation where two speakers exchange messages. Children are becoming more active conversationalists. The children in this study made a lot of initiation. They responded to the questions raised by their parent and even made suggestions. In addition, the children also cooperated with their parent through constructively

expanding the context in that particular topic of the conversation non-linguistically or linguistically. The following utterance demonstrates the collaborative act.

(3) It's look like a boat. (C1L118)

Other Findings: Emotive Acts

During the analysis of the data, the researcher found other type of communicative acts that were not mentioned by Penman (1980, in Leaper, 1991). This study supports the Maxilom's (2007) study that also consisted of children's emotive acts which occurs when there is a display of emotion like for example singing voluntarily, screaming and etc. This is the following example:

(4) Agrrrr! Waaaa ((screaming)) (C3L17)

To summarize, collaborative, control, obliging, withdrawing, and emotive acts are evident in the children's speech.

Phonological Processes

Table 3. Phonological Processes of Children

Phonological Processes	Frequency
Stopping	34
Consonant cluster reduction	15
Gliding	9
Final Consonant deletion	7
Reduplication	4
Weak syllable deletion	2

Consonant harmony	0
Velar fronting	0
Other Processes	3
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Total	45
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The data revealed that the most occurring processes of the children are stopping, consonant cluster reduction, and gliding.

Stopping

Stopping is the most occurring process in this study with the frequency of 34. Based on the researchers' observation, the children had difficulty in pronouncing fricatives such as so they naturally substituted it with the stops /p, b, t, d, k, g/. In addition, the children aged 4 years old children can master consonants /b, k, g, d, f, j/. The consonants /t, n, r, l/ meet the mastery criterion of six years and finally, consonants /s, tʃ, ʃ, z, dʒ, v, θ, ð/ sometime later than six years. Therefore, the children had difficulties in pronouncing the consonants indicated above it's because they haven't fully reach it. This is the following example:

(5) /dat/ → /ðæt/ (that)

Consonant Cluster Reduction

Consonant Cluster Reduction is the second prevailing process. Children naturally omit a cluster because they tend to imitate adults' target words, but their mental capacity for representation is not sufficient. Evidence for the word-based representations is the theory cognitive problem-solving model is inconsistency across children's first words on how particular phoneme is produced. If the children had a system of representing sounds such as /p/ in pretty and /p/ in purse were the same, they ought to sound the same when produced (Ferguson & Farwell in Hoff, 2011, p. 141). Several factors influence children in their language development. First, the participants in her study were all bilinguals. Second was their social environment. Social consideration has a lot of role to play in children's language development. The parents' support in the children's production of words like having direct instruction to their children and be a good models of language could at least help children's production. Consider the following example:

(6) /tUrniŋ/ → /t^h ə-nIn/ (turning)

Gliding

Gliding refers to the substitution of /w, y/ for another consonant. Moreover, gliding occurs frequently on prevocalic liquids /r & l/ in singletons clusters (Hoff, 2001, p. 137). The data showed that the two samples involved the substitution of the liquids /r & l/ to the glides /w & y/. This is the following example:

(7) /wɛkord/ → /rɛkɜ-d/ (record)

Other Findings

These words were uttered in ways that were not supported by Hoff-Ginsberg's (2001) theories: There were deviations in the production of vowels. The phonological processes which can be explained by Bulabog (1968) are also evident. The participants replaced /ɛ/ with /I/, or /ɔ/ with /U/. Bulabog (1968) explained the rest of the causes of deviations. Cebuano-Bisaya has a limited of number of vowel sounds, namely /i/, /u/ and /a/. American English, on the other hand has eleven. Since the young bilinguals attempt to produce American English phonemes with their Cebuano-Bisaya knowledge of vowel sounds, interference is a contributing factor of deviations. She also pointed out the speaker replaces the tongue which is most appropriate to the sound, or 2) the speaker 're-interprets the unfamiliar sound' to one that is the easiest or most comfortable for his/her limited phonemic knowledge. These are the following example:

(8) /bulpIn/ → /bɔlp n/ (ballpen)

(9) /tʃIk/ → /tʃɛk/ (check)

(10) /rId/ → /rɛd/ (red)

Consequently, the most prevalent features in the communicative acts of male children aged 4 years old are obliging, control, and collaborative while in the phonological process, they are stopping, consonant cluster reduction and gliding.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

With all the important and main findings unveiled, these are the following conclusions: The child

constantly seeks to express himself and to comprehend the language of others. The medium through which the child can best achieve language development is interaction. Through interaction children use communicative acts in providing meanings. Children typically have phonological constraints because children try to sound like adults but don't have enough linguistic resources. In this study, although all of the participants have the same age range, they still have individual differences seen in the language skills that they exhibited based on the utterances they had during the observations. Many of these differences can be traced to variations in the social circumstances of children and the nature of the social interactions they have.

Several factors that might affect children's language development can be considered. First is the social environment. Social considerations must have a role to play in language development and its' role is to shape, encourage, and mold the competencies of children in conversations. Second is the size of the family. This could also affect the rate of language development because opportunities for one-on-one conversation between mothers and their children have increased as the number of children decreases. Moreover, such intensive one-on-one conversations facilitate language learning. Third are the models of language development. The richness and variety of the linguistic input to the children provided in the modeling group is precisely the type of language that determines the acquisition. Lastly, children are all bilinguals. Since the children speak two languages, the words are sometimes influenced by their native language that leads to 'language interference'.

On the basis of the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are taken into account: other researchers can pursue studies on children's discourse to further enhance this study by covering more participants for more conclusive results and findings. Future researchers may elaborate this study by focusing both on consonant and vowels sounds of children in view of phonological processes. They could expand this study with theories concerning bilingualism and language acquisition. Future researchers may also find other kind of participants to study on the following: 1) sibling dyads; 2) parent-child groups; 3) toddlers; homogeneous child groups, etc.

Moreover, future researchers would like to study children's discourse can use video-tape recorder as well as proper lightning to capture nuances and actions of the participants integral to the study. Video-tape recorder is an important tool because it captures the non-verbal and non-vocal behaviors of children which contribute extensively to one's attempts to analyze and make inferences about comprehension but also about production. Providing inter-raters' in children's discourse is highly recommended. Notably, inter-raters' help to control or at least mitigate biases upon analyzing your data. Parents are also encouraged to be good language models in children's learning language. Because the richness and variety

of the linguistic input provided by the parents to the children may be the type of language the children can acquire since they are fond of imitating. Hence, parents must be encouraged to read books to their children so that children can gain all benefits of listening to narrative stories and getting meaning from connected prose or discourse.

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