A Pragmatic Analysis of Discourse Particles in Filipino Computer Mediated Communication

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ABSTRACT

As the English language continues to evolve through time, many of its structures and functions changed, which made it even realizable that the smallest unit in a discourse can play a crucial role in communication. Hence, this present study is an attempt to investigate the phenomenon and further delve into the discourse-pragmatic functions of discourse particles (DPs) in digital genres, particularly on Facebook, since DPs are commonly used by Filipino youths when posting and commenting online. Thirty tertiary-level students from different universities in Metro Manila, Philippines, were selected to participate in the present study. Using both qualitative and quasi-quantitative methods, results revealed a surprising number and interesting types of combined English and Filipino Relational DPs having several micro functions. Generally, they serve as a device that can let the interlocutors convey their emotions, relationships, and attitudes towards the receiver of their message. Discourse particles have crucial and prominent implications in the way Filipinos, particularly the youth, express their message, gain understanding of the received message, and establish speaker-receiver relationships and attitude on Facebook.

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics and creativity of the English language have gone beyond what humans can ever imagine. Due to developments in computer technology, technology-conditioned new words and phrases (Bodomo, 2009) such as 'Selfie' and 'Google it' have been coined. These words have outpaced their classical and archetypal counterpart expressions 'to take a picture of oneself' and 'to search something from a computer engine,' and interestingly, have become notable words of today's generation. However, not only the function words, but even the discourse particles (henceforth will be referred to as DPs) such as *Oh, OMG,* and *Haha*, which may be considered as trivial expressions, have become ubiquitous in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and have contributed to digital meaning making. The present study, therefore, aims at investigating the use of English and Filipino DPs used by Filipino youth when posting and commenting online. Most previous studies on DPs have been made in the context of pen and paper tradition or in spoken genres (Redeker, 1990; 1991; Trillo, 1997; Schiffrin, 1987; Blakemore, 2002; Aijmer, 2002). Very scant research has been done on DPs in CMC. The present investigation is justified by this gap in research.

Discourse particles are "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31); they serve a variety of functions depending on context. Commonly-used English DPs that have already received the most attention among researchers in the field include lexical forms *well, now, but, so, then,* and fillers such as *oh, uh,* and *um* (Bolden, 2006). Having been termed differently by different proponents, discourse particles have been the center of endeavor for the past decade. DPs have been referred to in the literature (in Heidar & Biria, 2011) as cue phrases (Knott & Dale, 1994), discourse connectives (Blakemore, 2002), discourse operators (Redeker, 1990, 2000), pragmatic connectives (Van Dijk, 1979), pragmatic markers (Fraser, 1999; Schiffrin, 1987), sentence connectives (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), discourse particles (Aijmer, 2002) and discourse markers (Scheler & Fischer, 1996).

Some researchers view DPs as a tool for cohesion; and they could be conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases that connect two sentences or clauses together, indicating transition points in a sentence or between sentences to meet cohesion relations (Fraser, 1999; Louwerse & Heather, 2003; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). On the other hand, other proponents claim that discourse particles go beyond grammatical and cohesive functions, extracting relevance and meaning in its immediate context (Redeker, 1990; 2000; Trillo, 1997; Schiffrin, 1987; Blakemore, 2002; Aijmer, 2002). Moreover, these researchers argue that DPs are contextually-specific expressions, making it difficult to study them from purely lexical, syntactic and grammatical perspectives. Ostman (1982) and Trillo (1997) assert that DPs have mainly pragmatic functions; the interlocutors are sources of meaning and not the particles alone. The speakers' input provides clues in decoding the meaning of the particles in a discourse, as these cues become significant symbols in interaction (Lee, Lee, Azizah, & Wong, 2010). Moreover, most of these DPs are optional syntactic items whose inclusion or omission does not affect the grammatical correctness or the propositional content of a sentence (Tay Li Chia, Chan Mei Yuit, Yap Ngee Thai, & Wong Bee Eng, 2012). However, DPs are important clues which are indicative of the speakers' commitment or detachment to their claims and to the receiver of the message.

Aijmer (2002) mainly stresses that "DPs do not have propositional meanings and they are different from ordinary words in the language because of the large number of pragmatic values that they can be associated with," (p. 16). Furthermore, she believes that DPs cannot be limited into one linguistic class, and that they should be separated from other functional word class. DPs can be textual items which achieve cohesion in a discourse (e.g., but, so, however, and, firstly, etc.); while some could be interpersonal whose meaning is all dependent on the speaker's attitude and intentions (e.g., oh, well, okay, hmm).

Although there are variations among proponents regarding the definitions and classifications of discourse particles, there is a general consensus that "DPs play significant roles in any spoken interaction," Siti Nurbaya Mohd Nor (2012, p. 2). They segment utterances, signal new topics, implicate important information, establish rapport between speakers and hearers, signal the attitude of the speaker; and help take, yield or hold a turn (Schiffrin, 1987; Grosz et al., 1989 in Scheler & Fischer, 1996). DPs can signal norms of turn-taking structure in a conversation. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974 in Siti Nurbaya Mohd Nor, 2012) claim that "these norms manifest in a systematic way and guide the speaker as to when to speak during a conversation and how to relate a turn in a sequence operating in adjacency pairs such as greeting, reciprocation, question, answer, summons, acknowledgement, request, compliance, and so on" (p. 3). Some examples of discourse particles that may mark turn's continuation and misplacement are *so, and, but, really, by the way, hey, listen, now, okay,* and a lot more. These DPs are not interchangeable since each particle plays a particular kind of relationship between the upcoming turn and the prior

context (Bolden, 2006). Through the use of discourse particles, speakers could say what they really intended to say, establish closeness or familiarity, and guide the listener as to how and what to infer from the discourse. Additionally, DPs, do the job of making the conversation flow smoothly and become more interesting, understandable, polite and engaging, while not compromising and distorting its underlying meaning (Jones & Carter, 2014). Hence, DPS are essential linguistic devices that serve as bridges in arriving at relevant and certain interpretation of discourse (Tay et al., 2012).

One of the many prominent discourse particles used in discourse is the interjection *Oh*. This multi-functional particle has been investigated in several perspectives. In addition to its core meaning which suggests a feeling of surprise, *Oh* is used to express realization and clarification (Heritage, 1998), disassociation (Bolden, 2006), politeness (Aijmer, 2002), and topic development and endorsement (Trihartanti & Damayanti, 2014). The particle *well* is also multifunctional because it serves as a response marker at the beginning of a turn; tends to answer yes/no-questions; signals hesitations, reservations, objections, rejections, and indirectness; mitigates face-threatening responses; and fills interactional silence (Stenstrom, 1994, in Siti Nurbaya, 2012; Bolden, 2006; Schegloff & Lerner, 2009). Similarly, *mmhm, uh-huh, yeah,* and *right* serve several functions in discourse. These DPs act as continuers produced by addressees in conversation, implicating the addressees' understanding that the speaker's turn is not yet complete. They are also used as tokens of acknowledgement and passive response (Schegloff & Lerner, 2009; Heritage, 1984, and Jefferson, 1984 in Bolden, 2006). The cognitive particle *I think* suggests an element of uncertainty toward the subject being talked about. However, aside from uncertainty, it acts as a hedging device or a politeness marker, restraining a possible face-threatening response (Wichmann & Chanet, 2009).

Due to the ever growing possible words and phrases that could be included in this linguistic category of DPs, research in this area has mushroomed in recent decades. Study on discourse particles is originally under Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics concerned with speaker meaning. However, it now extends to other fields especially in communication, sociology, linguistic anthropology, psychology, and interactional linguistics. It spans many theoretical and methodological orientations and covers an increasingly wide variety of languages across the globe (Bolden, 2006) in both spoken and written forms.

Previous studies on DPS can be divided into two: (a) DPs on speech contexts and conversations and (b) DPs on written genres. Majority of research done in the former group has focused on the usage of discourse particles in a conversation, which, according to Andersen (1999), "describes how the interlocutors: (1) create coherence and structure within a discourse by coordinating speech acts, turns, and propositional content; (2) provide feedback from listeners about whether a prior utterance has been understood or not, and whether they agree or disagree; and (3) signal production problems on the part of the speaker," (p.2). Other group of researchers looked into the use and functions of DPs in written texts. For instance, Giora (1997, 1998) and Tan-de Ramos (2010) believe that DPs play a major role in achieving coherence in written texts especially in academic papers. Some proponents claim that DPs give cues in leading the reader into the writer's meaning with minimum cognitive processing (Blakemore, 1987, 1992, 2002; Blass, 1990; Iten, 1998; Wilson & Sperber, 1993 in Tan- de Ramos, 2010). The aforementioned studies strengthen the premise that DPs are significant devices not only in spoken communication but also in written genres, for they help in conveying the message to the readers.

DPs in other languages aside from English have also been investigated in previous studies. One example is the research of Wang (2011) which points out that "DPs *ano* and *nage* in Japanese language carry similar multiple discourse-pragmatic functions in various social contexts, which include (1) introducing a new referent/topic in a highlighted but less

imposing way; (2) mitigating various Face Threatening Acts; and (3) indicating the speaker's hesitancy in sharing certain personal information," (p. 41). In addition to that, Wang's study claims that the DPs "*ano* and *nage* are politeness markers (Brown & Levinson, 1987) as well as modality markers (Maynard, 1992), and such usages are derived from their original forms as demonstrative adjectives," (2011, p. 41). Other studies involving DPs in other languages include the investigation of Miracle (1991 in Wang, 2011) on Mandarin Chinese DPs, Stede and Schmitz (2000) on German DPs, Moreno (2001) on Spanish DPs, and Waltereit (2002) on Italian DPs. Despite the plethora of research done in the classification and functions of DPs across languages, it cannot conceal the dearth of research that focuses on the use and functions of DPs in computer-mediated communication (CMC), which is an important area of investigation due to the fact that technology has revolutionized the way humans interact nowadays. Moreover, CMC is a quintessential area of research because it combines both spoken and written discourse. Meanwhile, some of the few studies that used data from CMC are the studies of Low and Deterding (2003) on Singaporean DPs (e.g., *lah, hor* being the widely used in most of the blogs examined); Tay et al. (2012) on Malaysian DPs used by Chinese-Malaysian youth in their Facebook accounts wherein the DPs *lah, lo, leh, ah*, and *d/edy* being the most frequently used DPs which serve as pragmatic markers to discern interpersonal meanings; and Fung and Carter (2007) on comparative study of how the DPS are used by bilingual English-Cantonese speaking and native speaker university students in Internet Relay Chat-based CMC to perform competently in different functional levels.

In addition, there is also a limited body of research focusing on the functions of Filipino DPs or even English DPs in Philippine context. One study was done by Morales (2013), wherein she investigated the usage and function of Philippine English DPs *actually* and *in fact* in written and spoken discourse. Another is the study of Walrod (2006) which identified the functions of DPs of eight Northern Philippine languages. He claimed that some of the functions of Filipino DPs were to intensify, to minimize, to refute, or to hedge. One study that used data on Filipino CMC is the exploration of Dino and Gustilo (2015) which identified the linguistic features of CMC. One of their findings indicated that English and Filipino DPs were used to emphasize the statement before or after the DP and to establish interpersonal relationship with the readers.

The present study aims at filling a gap in CMC research on the use of DPs by investigating the use of English and Filipino DPs used by Filipino youth when posting and commenting online. Specifically, this research intends to contribute in the field of pragmatics and discourse analysis by investigating the following research questions:

1. What are the discourse particles commonly used by Filipino youth in their Facebook (FB) posts and comments?
2. What are the functions of these discourse particles?

The present study treated both English and Filipino DPs alike, which means that it assumes that English DPs and their functions found in the previous literature have counterparts in Filipino CMC. However, the present study also sought to identify how the functions of English and Filipino DPs used by Filipino youth differ from the functions already found in the existing literature. The present study drew on Fung and Carter's (2007) categories as a point of departure in the analysis of DPs in Filipino Youth's Facebook interaction. Fung and Carter proposed that DPs have multi-functional paradigm and can be categorized into four (4) macro-level functions, namely: (1) structural; (2) referential; (3) cognitive; and (4) interpersonal.

TABLE 1. Fung and Carter's (2007) Macro Level of Discourse Particles

Category	Sample Discourse Particles
Structural	So, now, previously, before, finally, today, etc.
Referential	While, because, however, like, and, though
Cognitive	I think, I mean, you know, hmm, well
Interpersonal	Okay, OMG, oh, yes, yeah, etc.

In *Structural category*, DPs function as a signal in opening and closing topics, and in indicating sequence in a sentence. Examples of DPs that fall under this category are *today, finally, previously, first, so, then, now,* and so on. The second category, *Referential,* is used in marking the connection between the already-stated discourse and the upcoming ones (Heidar & Biria, 2011). Functions of DPs in this category include indicating causal relationship, contrasts, consequences, comparison, coordination, and disjunction. Examples of DPs in this category include *because, and, like, or, while,* and *however.* Thirdly, the *Cognitive* category reflects the interlocutors' thinking process. Discourse particles such as *I mean, I think,* and *hmm* are examples of DPs that manifest the speaker's clarification and modification of ideas mentioned in an utterance. According to Svartvik (1980, in Heidar & Biria, 2011), "the DP *well* can also be included in the list if it signals a delaying tactic to show the thinking process when an answer is not at hand" (p.1484). Lastly, DPs under the *Interpersonal* category serve as emotive/interactive functions. These DPs carry multiple discourse-pragmatic functions that the interlocutors use in order to establish and maintain rapport with one another in a conversation. Examples of DPs that are classified into this category are *oh, OMG, haha, eh, LOL, okay,* and so on.

However, while coding the DPs, we modified Fung and Carter's (2007) framework based on how we identified DPs in our data function. DPs used by selected Filipino youth seem to serve two macro functions: to take care of the textual concerns in discourse and to manage interpersonal relationship during interaction. Hence, we evolved a two-level macro function of DPs based on Fung and Carter's (2007) categories: Textual DPs and Relational DPs. In our proposed two-level macro functions, Textual DPs correspond to Fung and Carter's Structural and Referential DPs because the two latter categories are mainly for the management of structure and coherence of the text. The different transition signals that express sequence or flow of ideas, cause and effect, and other referential expressions can be found under this category. Our second macro function, Relational DPs, correspond to the Interpersonal Category of Fung and Carter's framework. The DPs listed in the Cognitive Category of Fung and Carter that occurred in our data actually facilitates interpersonal relationships with the interlocutors. For example, *hmm* (a filler*)*, indicates hesitation in agreeing about what was said in order to avoid offending the person. *well,* in our data, does not function as a delaying tactic to indicate thinking processes. Hence, we dropped the Cognitive Category in our evolved framework. This second macro function generally addresses the interactional concerns of the users with their audience. DPs in this category serve emotive and interactive functions. Moreover, they are open to subjectivity, for the interpretations of these DPs may vary depending on the context; and they are dependent on the intentions of the participant.

METHODOLOGY

The present study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to accurately gather and analyze the needed data. A content analysis of the compiled posts and comments of the participants was utilized. In addition, a descriptive survey questionnaire was used to further explore the intention of a user in using a specific DP.

PARTICIPANTS

Thirty tertiary-level students from different universities in Metro Manila, Philippines, were selected to participate in the present study. The gender ratio of the population size was 4:26 (males: females). The gender of the sample size was not taken into account as it is not a variable that was included in the investigation. Participants were screened according to the following criteria: (1) must be between15-25 years old, since 40 % of Filipino heavy-users of Facebook is represented by users in this age range (Dino & Gustilo, 2015); and (2) participants should usually spend 6 hours or more a day to be called a heavy-user of Facebook. According to Stewart (2016), the average time that users spend on Facebook is nearly an hour. Moreover, considering the fact that there are only 24 hours a day and a normal person has to spend almost eight hours to get enough sleep, it means that "more than one-sixteenth of the average user's waking time is spent on Facebook, and it is almost as much time as people spend eating and drinking (1.07 hours)" (Stewart, 2016, para. 3). For the present study, the researchers considered the number of hours spent on the aforementioned social site as a criterion for heavy-user of Facebook regardless of the number of times they post or comment every day. This is because not all Facebook users post or comment every day. Sometimes, they simply chat with the other users, browse, read, share, or like the posts of other users and yet spend long hours on Facebook. Some users may only spend thirty minutes and yet post or comment many times.

For the content analysis, the present study compiled the posts and comments of each participant within a month. Every participant has about 25-50 combined posts and comments. This is the average number of posts and follow-up comments gathered for each participant. However, some users did not post or comment at least once a day (25-29 posts/comments) and other users posted more than once a day (30-50 posts/comments) within a month. Due to this variation, the frequency of DP occurrences might have been influenced as those who post more than the others might have used the same kinds of DPs. Thus, this has been considered as one of the limitations of this study, which can be addressed in future studies by sampling participants who have the same frequency of posts.

The unit of analysis used was per post and per comment on the post. With the help of a software database called *AntConcv. 3.4.3,* it was easier to identify the DPs and the number of times they have been used by the participants. However, one of the limitations of *Antconc* is that it generates different frequencies for the variants of the same DP which was altered by spelling (e.g., *hahahaha* and *haha; eh* and *e*). Hence, manual counting of the frequencies of the DPs with variant spellings was made by finding the variant spellings of the same DP in *Antconc's* generated word frequencies and combining the DPs' frequencies. For example, for the DP haha, we combined the frequencies of hahaha (100), hahahaha (210), and haha (361), yielding 671 frequencies for the DP haha.

For the descriptive survey, the thirty participants were given a survey questionnaire which includes questions about demographic information and twenty (20) examples of commonly used DPs in FB such as *OMG, ah, eh, oh, haha, hala/luh, okay, aww, ugh, hmm*, and so on. It is notable that that the majority of the DPs in the questionnaire are relational in function; this is due to that fact that the analysis of each participant's posts and comments was done first, and its results served as the basis for the construction of the questionnaire. This second phase of the analysis was aimed at providing more information regarding the functions of the most commonly used DPs, which were relational in function based on the finding in Research Question 1, from the perspective of the users.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using *AntConc, the text* analysis reveals that out of 10,691 word tokens or the total number of words in the compiled corpus and out of 3,145 different word types, the DP or the interjection *'haha',* with a frequency of 671 including all its variants *hahaha, ahahaha, and hahahaha,* tops the list of DPs identified in the FB posts and comments of Filipino youth under study. Table 2 presents the top 10 DPs in the corpus.

TABLE 2. Top 10 Discourse Particles (DPs) Commonly Used by Filipino Youth
*Word tokens: 10,691 *Word types: 3145

DP	F	Rank
Haha	671	1
Eh	273	2
Ah	70	3
And	59	4
Yes/ Yeah	56	5
Oh	54	6
Hehe	44	7
LOL	37	8
Noh	29	9
Okay	24	10

As Table 2 shows, the second most prevalent DP is the particle *'eh',* which has a huge difference in terms of frequencies when compared to *haha.* Taking a closer look at the results, it is noticed that all the DPs fall under the *Relational category*, which means that these DPs were used emotively to interact and to build rapport with the listener, except for one, a connective DP *and*, which is the fourth most frequently used DP. This DP is classified in the *Textual category*; it can function as an additive and a connective. It appears that DPs in the interaction of Filipino Facebook users under study are mainly used for two general purposes: to create coherence and structure in discourse, and to establish interpersonal relationship with the audience as represented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Distribution of DPs on Facebook Posts and Comments

General Purpose of DPs	Number of DPs	Frequency
A. Relational	36	1,913
B. Textual	24	334

The DPs classified in the Relational category were used more frequently by the Filipino youth when communicating online in their posts and follow-up comments. These DPs serve as a device that can let them convey their emotions, relationship, and attitude towards the receiver of their message. The DPs *hmm* and *well*, which were listed under the Cognitive category in Fung and Carter's (2007) framework, did not function as indicators of thought processes in our data. They were used to maintain smooth interaction and rapport in discourse. Hence, they were categorized as Relational DPs.

Statements [1] and [2] by participants 1 and 24 exemplify the Relational function of DPs identified in our data:

[1] Participant 1:*"I miss manila. I miss Mang Inasal and Agno.* **OMG.** *MANILAAAAAA!!"*
[2]Participant 24:*"When I get bored, I tend to eat a lot. As simple as that.* **Hahahaha."**

The use of *OMG* (acronym word for *Oh My God*) as a Relational DP aids the statement of Participant 1 in expressing her intense desire to be in Manila, particularly, to eat in her favorite fast food chains *Mang Inasal* and *Agno*. Meanwhile, the DP *haha* in [2] lends

support to Participant 24 when she tried telling something about herself, specifically about eating when getting bored and just being happy and fine with it.

The thirty five (35) *Relational* DPs identified from the corpus are *waah (transcription of cry)*, *aww* (transcription of a reaction indicating surprise or oddness), *yehey* (expression of excitement) , *ah, eh, oh, lol* (acronym for laugh out loud), *OMG* (acronym for Oh My God), *yes, yeah, okay, noh/no, really, ugh* (transcription of a reaction sounded in the throat), *wooh* (transcription of excitement), *well, hmm, sige* (Filipino word for okay or all right), *oy* (transcription of a way of calling someone's attention in Filipino conversation), *laah/luh* (clipped word for Filipino word *hala* which is used to warn someone), *hay/hays* (transcription of sigh), *tsk* (transcription of the sound made in the tongue), *nako* (variant spelling of Filipino word *naku* which is an interjection expression), *hey, wew* (interjection whew in English), *psst* (a way to call someone using sounds produced in the lips), *toinks* (a transcription of a sound that indicates something is odd), *duh* (a form of reaction that indicates oddness or sarcasm), *ohaa* (transcription of a sound indicating laughter or sarcasm), *yohoo/yihee/ayiee* (expressions of excitement, variant forms of yehey), *huhu* (transcription of cry), and *hehe/hihi/hoho* (variant forms of the transcription of laughter). The detailed functions of most frequently used *Relational* DPs will be discussed in the next table.

On the other hand, there are 24 different types of DPs that serve as a tool in connecting sentences and the entire discourse. These include *and, now, tho* (Filipino youth's digital spelling for 'though'*), because, so, but*, *like, or, after, anyway, then, finally, since, while, until, before, right away,* as well as the Filipino DPs *kasi (because), at (and), pero (but), kahit (although), dahil (because), kapag (when)*, and *tapos (after).*

[3]participant 3: *"Almost got into an accident this early!!! **Until now**, I'm still trembling. I was 2 seconds away from dying."*

[4] participant 8: *" It's the poem that I love to read **because** it reflects my deepest thoughts and wildest dreams."*

[5]participant 1: *"If you say that money is more important than the environment, **then** try not to breathe while counting your money!"*

[6]participant 7: *"Yes**, but** it doesn't mean that I am only after Koreanovelas. I also want their food, culture, tourist spots, and lifestyle. As in Korea."*

[7] Participant 16: *"Happiness is not found at the end of the road, it is experienced along the way. **So** take not for granted each moment of your life **and** you will find a reason to be happy each day."*

The selected posts in [3-7] by participants 3, 8, 1, 7, and 16 show the use of DP in achieving coherence and structure in discourse. In [3], the DP *until now* functions as a time marker, indicating that because of what happened, Participant 3 had been experiencing strong emotions associated with trembling from the moment it happened until the time she narrated the event. The DP *until now* aids in the overall structure and sequence of discourse by connecting the events that happened in the past to the present. The second DP *because* in [4] signals causal relations. The DPs *then* in [5] and *so* in [7] function as connectors of one idea or action to another in order to create a smooth flow of ideas. Lastly, DP *pero* (Filipino counterpart of *but*) in [6] contrasts ideas, and *and* in [7] supplements ideas in a discourse.

As shown in the excerpts [1] and [2], DPs in the Relational category have emotive and expressive functions. They are grammatically and semantically optional, which means that their presence or absence in an utterance does not change the meaning but heavily reflects the attitude of the speaker and the relationship between interlocutors. Unlike Relational DPs, the absence or presence of DPs in the Textual category will greatly change the semantic meaning of discourse. These DPs function as a tool for cohesion, governing the overall construction and sense of discourse. Furthermore, they provide hints to the receiver of the message as to whether the speaker is narrating events, contrasting the expressed thought, and supplementing

information to what has been said. Their absence may cause distortion of the intended message between interlocutors since the discourse lacks sufficient hints; as a result, the "interlocutors cannot best figure out the relations among discourse pieces" (Heidar & Biria, 2011, p. 1481).

In addition to our text analysis of the functions of DPs in the compiled corpus, the present study delved into the discourse-pragmatic perspectives of the participants regarding their most frequently used DPs on Facebook, which are DPs in the Relational category. Table 4 presents the micro-level functions of twenty most recurring DPs in the Relational category based on the analysis of the responses of the participants regarding their reasons/intentions for using a particular DP. Our analysis of the functions of the DPs in their posts and comments match their self-reported intentions as to why they used these DPs.

TABLE 4. Pragmatic Micro-level Functions of Relational DPs

DP	Definition/ Description	Functions of DPs based on Participants' replies
1. **OMG**	Acronym for Oh My God	- To emphasize intense feeling of excitement, surprise, or amazement - To show interest when one finds out something interesting
2. **Ah**	No lexical meaning. A filler similar to hmm.	-To express enlightenment, agreement with the speaker, sarcasm, disinterest and laziness to respond -a conversation stopper
3. **Eh**	No lexical meaning; usually found at the end of each utterance	-To express uncertainty, embarrassment, disagreement, and complaint -An indirect way of saying 'no' to a request -Just an additional word in a sentence for the sake of style
4. **Oh**	an interjection at the beginning of an utterance;	-To express unbelief, acceptance, surprise, sarcasm, hurt, feeling of surprise - and quick response showing attention -To continue the conversation
5. **Ha/ Huh**	No lexical meaning; an interjection; usually found at the end of an utterance; it is sometimes followed by a question mark.	-To express confusion, shock, irritation, dissatisfaction to what has been said
6. **Luh/ Hala**	Clipped form of *hala,* a Filipino word for warning someone; usually found at the beginning of an utterance	-To express surprise, opposition, disagreement, disbelief, warning, anxiety for something that went wrong
7. **Hmm**	A filler similar to ah	- To show hesitation in agreeing about what was said in order not to offend the person; - An indirect way of indicating disagreement
8. **Okay**	An interjection; it lexically means yes.	-To express agreement, disappointment, acceptance -Conversation stopper
9. **Yes/ Yeah**	An interjection which indicates agreement	-To express deal, excitement, agreement, overwhelming happiness when something was attained, positive response -Conversation stopper
10. **Like**	A word that can be a verb, noun, adjective, or adverb depending on its usage; can serve as a hedging device	-To express interest, approval, agreement, or appreciation on something

	when it shows indirectness and hesitation (Siegel, 2002).	
11. LOL	Acronym for Laughing Out Loud	-To indicate that the receiver of the message is literally 'laughing out loud', -To show awkwardness in a situation -Conversation stopper
12. Haha	Transcription of laughter; no lexical meaning; usually found at the beginning, middle, or end of an utterance	-To express happiness, appreciation on something funny, boredom, or sarcasm -Conversation stopper
13. Hehe	Another form of transcription of laughter; no lexical meaning; usually found at the beginning, middle, or end of an utterance	-To express politeness and boredom -Less intense kind of laughing -ends a follow-up to a request -Conversation stopper
14. Hihi	Another form of transcription of laughter; no lexical meaning; usually found at the beginning, middle, or end of an utterance	-Cuter way of laughing -Can indicate 'kilig' -Conversation stopper
15. Huhu	Transcription of cry; no lexical meaning	-To express sadness or loneliness.
16. Aww	An interjection; transcription of a reaction to something	-To express disappointment, pain, hurt, sadness -To show amusement on cute/sweet things
17. Ugh	An interjection ; a transcription of a reaction to something	-To express depression, frustration, helplessness, disgust, annoyance, irritation, disinterest, or rage on something -To express great desire on something that is difficult to achieve
18. I mean	A filler	-To clarify, elaborate what was mentioned
19. Well	An interjection; a filler; usually found at the beginning or middle part of an utterance.	-To proudly say something -To express anticipation of something
20. Waah	An interjection; transcription of a loud cry or emotional reaction to something; no lexical meaning; usually found at the beginning or end of an utterance	-To express fright, admiration, surprise, disappointment, rage -used when freaking out

Table 4 shows the frequently used Relational DPs of Filipino Facebook users in their posts and comments on Facebook. It is evident that the micro functions of Relational DPs vary depending on what the FB users mean and how they impart the message. As shown in Table 4, it can be discerned that one Relational DP can have several functions. For example, the DP or the interjection *haha,* which is the most prevalent DP represented in Table 1, can serve as a linguistic device expressing positive emotions, especially when talking to someone in which the speaker is familiar with (friends, relatives, and so on). In addition, according to the surveyed participants, they also used the DP *haha* to express boredom or sarcasm.

Aside from DP *haha,* other DPs that express positive feelings (e.g., joy, happiness, and so on) are *hehe, hihi,* and *LOL.* These are also listed as a device used to end a conversation in an utterance. In addition to the function of DP *hehe,* according to the participants, it serves as a less intense way of laughing and, somehow, introduces a polite way of saying things to an acquaintance. Moreover, *hehe* is used as a way to end a follow-up to a request. The DP *hihi* is commonly used as a demurer way of laughing, especially when talking to loved ones. Examples for each function are as follows:

[8] Participant 21:*"Ang adorable mo po ate. Hehe."* (Translation: You are adorable. **Hehe.)**
   Gloss: Example 8 was used by participant 21 as a polite way of expressing a compliment.
[9] Participant 5: *"Pwede ko po bang makuha yung payment tomorrow?* **Hehe."**
   Translation: *Can I get the payment tomorrow?* **Hehe.**
   Gloss: **Hehe** was used to end a follow-up to a request.
[10] Participant 11:*"Thank you sa gift.* **Hihi.***"(Translation: Thank you for the gift. Hihi.)*
[11] Participant 2: *"Masyado ka naman proud sa akin.* **Hihi.***" (Translation: You are too proud of me. Hihi.)*
   Gloss: The speakers in excerpts [10] and [11] implied shyness regarding the thing and attention they received from their interlocutors.

On the other hand, there are DPs that carry negative feelings such as the DPs *huhu* and *ugh.* According to the participants' replies*,* the DP *huhu* expresses sadness and loneliness; while the DP *ugh* expresses frustration, helplessness, disgust, annoyance, irritation, disinterest, and rage on something. *Ugh* also expresses a desire for something that cannot be possessed at the moment. Examples from the participants' posts and comments using these DPs are presented below.
[12] Participant 25*: "And I was* **like**. **Ugh.** *Because he always blames."*
   Gloss: The DP *ugh* by Participant 25 was used to express annoyance, frustration, or rage on something.
***(note:** The DP like functions as a hedging device which made the participant sound less direct in addressing frustration and annoyance to the other interlocutor).*
[13] Participant 6*:" Just a little more. A little more sacrifice.* **Ugh.**"
   Gloss: Participant 6 used the DP **ugh** to convey frustration about something that had not been achieved.
[14] Participant 1: *"Bring me food which is Isaw pls!* **Huhu.***"*
   Gloss: The DP *huhu* was used to express sadness about not having eaten a kind of food which he requested his friend to send to him.

Some DPs convey both positive and negative emotions between the speaker and the receiver of the message. These DPs include *ah, oh, okay, LOL, haha, hehe, hihi, awww, well,* and *waah.* Based on the analysis of the participants' posts and comments on Facebook, these DPs can be used to create and affirm positive relations between the speakers. DPs such as *ah, oh, okay, hala, yeah,* and *well* were used by Facebook users to indicate that they understood the point or learned something, confirm ideas or action done, or show agreement or approval.

In addition, *LOL, haha, hehe, hihi, aww,* and *waah* were used by Filipino youth to appreciate something funny or nice that had been said by the other interlocutor.

[15] Participant 9: **"*Awww. I was the one who pulled it off. Haha. Thank you!*"**
   Gloss: DP *aww introduces* acceptance of a compliment.
[16] Participant 3: "*Ah! That's why some of them have mutual friends.*)
[17] Participant 1: "*Oh, I hope you enjoyed the Philippines!*"
   Gloss: DPs *ah* and *oh* were used to indicate pleasant emotions after Participants [3] and [1] learned something during the course of interaction.
[18] Participant 7: "*Waah! Thank you, Anic! Chikay will be happy for sure.*"
   Gloss: DP *waah* was used to convey appreciation of something Anic has done.
[19] Participant 22: "**LOL**!! *Haha. She really looks like a siopao.*"
   Gloss: DP **LOL** followed by the DP **haha** was used to express how funny someone may seem in a speaker's point of view.
[20] Participant 14: "*It's **okay** buddy! As long as we're happy in what we do, WE CAN DO THIS.*)
   Gloss: DP **okay** of Participant 14 was used to somehow comfort and give affirmation to the receiver of the message.
[21] Participant 13: "*Wooooo! Finally done with thesis! Oh…**well**.*"
   Gloss: DP **well** was used to express something that Participant 13 was proud of.
FB user's post: "*Too many cool kids.*"
[22] Participant 12: "**Yeaaaah**!"
   Gloss: DP y*eah* was used to indicate strong agreement on something that the other posted.
[23] Participant 30: "*Hala. It's so cute*!)
   Gloss: DP *hala* was used to express admiration.

On the other hand, DPs *ah, oh, okay, hala, waah, LOL, haha, hehe, hihi, yeah,* and *well* can also be used as a response to indicate negative emotions toward the other speaker. Participants used these signals to end the discourse, which, in the Philippine culture, is a more acceptable and polite manner instead of not responding with anything at all. DP *aww* expresses being hurt or offended.

[24] Participant 11: "*Ayos **ah**. Emphasized ako.*" (Translation: *Cool **ah**. What I did was emphasized*)
   Gloss: DP *ah* was used by participant 11 to express sarcasm and that he was offended.
[25] Participant 20: "**Oh**…*it's already in CNN. Just cut it out*"
   Gloss: DP *Oh* was used to express annoyance.
Fb user's post: "*Your younger brother has a girlfriend. Your older brother has a wife. What happened to you?*"
[26] Participant 5: "**Okay.**"
   Gloss: DP *okay* was used as conversation stopper and a way to express that the topic offends him.
Fb user's post: "*We already passed it yesterday.*"
[27] Participant 26: "**Hala**. *I won't pass the form anymore.*"
   Gloss: DP *hala* was used to express surprise and as a hint that something went wrong.
Fb user's post: "*The University Concert tomorrow will be postponed due to inclement weather. Kindly wait for further announcement by the Board. Stay safe and dry!*"
[28] Participant 3: "**Waaaah**. *I am already prepared for tomorrow's event. Too bad! Sad*")
   Gloss: DP **waah** was used to express disappointment about the content of an announcement.
FB use*r's post: "I like you.*"
[29] Participant 12: **"LOL."**
(Nothing follows.)
   Gloss: *LOL* Expresses awkwardness in a situation. It was also used as a conversation stopper.

[30] Participant 13: *"I think people will definitely treat you nicer when you're good looking. **Awww***…"

   Gloss: Participant 13 posted a statement that offends her. She indicated this by using the DP *awww*.

Fb user's post: *"It's your birthday today! Where is the celebration?"*
[31] Participant 30: "**Hahaha**" --- nothing follows.
Fb user's post: *"Holiday break mo na?"* (Translation: *Is it your holiday break already?*)
[32] Participant 16: "*Yes po.* **Hehe.**" --- nothing follows.
Fb user's post: *"With my good looking but pretentious Korean friends."*
[33] Participant 21: "**Hihihi**" --- nothing follows.
Fb user's post: *"Nice one Go Pro!"*
[34] Participant 5: "**Yeaah!**" --- nothing follows
Fb user's post: *"If you don't move forward, you fall backwards into a river of shit."*
[35] Participant 26: "**Well**, *that's life.*" --- nothing follows.

   Gloss: DPs *haha, hehe, hihi, yeah,* and *well* are typically used to end a discourse.

It is interesting to note that although some DPs have already been defined and described in previous studies, their functions are not universal. They carry different functions in different settings or speech events. For example, according to Fung and Carter (2007), DPs *hmm* and *well* reflect thinking processes of the speaker. However, the analysis of posts and comments of the participants in this study show that DP *well* has been used by the participants to show sarcasm and to indicate something that they are proud about. Moreover, according to their posts, they used the DP *hmm* to play safe in a situation that they were not in favor and if they want to   indirectly say *no*. The DP *like,* which functions as a referential DP in Fung and Carter's (2007) framework, does not function that way (e.g. giving examples) in our present data; it functions as an expression of interest and appreciation on someone's post. Thus, *like* was coded as belonging in the Relational Category because it was used as a way to relate or show solidarity with the interlocutors.

   [36] Participant 29: *"Girly or Boyish?* **Well**, *I can be both"*
      Gloss: **Well**, introduces a statement of Participant 29, being proud of his/her ability to play both roles.
   [37] Participant 24: "**Hmm**. *I'm still working on mine eh. Try to ask our other blockmates."*
      Gloss: Hmm is an indirect way of saying *no* to a request which was given prior to the response of Participant 24.
   [38] Participant 15: *"Wow. You 'like' the earthquake?! You're so weird ha!)*
      Gloss: Like was referring to the default mechanism in FB which was clicked by users to indicate appreciation or interest on the post. It was used to express amusement/weirdness on someone's interest.

Furthermore, the analysis indicated that Filipino youth tend to use the DPs *ah, eh,* and *oh* as additional particles after a string of content words in their sentences. These DPs are semantically optional; their presence or absence in a sentence does not affect the semantic meaning intended by the interlocutors. For example, the participants added *ah, oh,* or *eh* in the words 'talaga naman' (i.e. in English, for sure or there is truth to it), which makes it *'talaga naman eh', 'talaga naman ah'*, and *'talaga naman oh'* without affecting the propositional meaning of the sentence.

CONCLUSION

In summary, results of text analysis and analysis of the perception data from the respondents in the present study reveal that Filipino youth tend to frequently use Relational DPs which are aimed at establishing relationships rather than DPs that are used for cohesion purposes. This

linguistic behavior of the Filipino youth is consistent with the Filipino values which emphasized on maintaining strong interpersonal relationships. These DPs are pragmatically emotive and expressive in function (Wang, 2011), and whose meanings rely heavily on the interlocutors. In addition, our analyses seem to indicate that DPs used in CMC such as Facebook achieve a different purpose when compared to DPs in pen and paper tradition which are more likely to serve as a tool for cohesion, giving empirical evidence that the functions of DPs are not universal. In addition, the present analyses drew on Fung and Carter's (2007) four-macro-level functions of DPs, but arrived at two-macro-level functions since our data only reflect two general functions of DPs: textual and relational; the first function relates to the need of interlocutors to achieve coherence in discourse, while the second function takes care of the concerns of interlocutors to express their feelings and relate with one another.

Since Relational DPs are the most prevalent ones in our data, the present study delved into the reasons behind their usage in order to know its micro functions in discourse; this analysis, perhaps, is one of the significant contributions of the present study. Previous studies on DPs only relied on text analysis.

Although this study is limited to a number of participants, which makes it difficult to generalize the linguistic behavior of Filipino youth on CMC, the present study was still able to establish that the types, frequencies, and functions of DPs in CMC may be different from other speech situations or genres. In addition, the present study was able to shed some light on future research directions of this underexplored field. Since the study of DPs in CMC is still in its infancy, it is premature to enumerate a full taxonomy of markers until there is greater agreement about the function/s of each DP, their meaning, and their relevance to pedagogic contexts (Heidar & Biria, 2011).

In order to validate the findings of the present study, it will prove beneficial if an analysis on DPs involving larger sample of participants is undertaken. Future analyses should confirm if, indeed, Filipino youth's behavior in CMC is more concerned about achieving relationships with their interlocutors. Equally important is the need to expand our analysis in different digital genres as new avenues for potential research (Hayati Idris & Rozina Abdul Ghani, 2012) since the growth and creativity of language are very evident in the digital world. Furthermore, the descriptive survey questionnaire only includes a very limited set of Interpersonal or Relational DPs. If future researchers could expand the list and categories of DPs, remarkable contributions will be made in the field of Pragmatics in CMC.

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APPENDIX A (Descriptive survey questionnaire)

Good day!

I would like to ask for your cooperation to answer this survey as a part of my study entitled "A Pragmatic Analysis of Discourse Particles on Facebook". This would take just a few minutes of your time. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you and God bless!

Age:

School:

1. Do you always check your fb account?
2. How many hours a day do you spend on this?

The following are 20 examples of words that are commonly used in FB comments and posts. Beside the word, (second column) please indicate your intended meaning when you use that certain expression. For example, OMG that expresses shock and interest toward the subject being talked about. Lastly, on the third column, please write your reason on why you use each expression listed below (e.g. use 'Ah' to end the conversation).

Expressions	What does this expression mean to you?	Why do you use it?
1. OMG		
2. Ah		
3. Eh		
4. Oh		
5. HA/Huh		
6. LUH/Hala		
7. Hmm		
8. Okay		
9. Yeah/Yes		
10. Like		
11. LOL		
12. HAHA		
13. HIHI		
14. HEHE		
15. HUHU		
16. Aww		
17. Ugh		
18. I mean		
19. Well		
20. Waaah		

Some samples of discourse particles are taken from Stenstrom's List of Discourse Particles (1994).

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