

A Speech Act Analysis of Greetings in Cameroon Social Media

Camilla Arundie Tabe¹

¹ Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, University of Maroua, Cameroon

Correspondence: CAMILLA ARUNDIE TABE, Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, University of Maroua, P. O. Box 644 Maroua, Cameroon. E-mail: camillata@yahoo.co.uk

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Abstract

Various language practices occur in computer Mediated Communication era. E-greeting is singled out as a particular practice with its own linguistic forms on social media platforms. Among the social media users in Cameroon, it is undoubtedly observed that greeting is shared depending on the context, the social background, the space and familiarities of the interlocutors. Each speaker might find himself/herself tending to undertake this practice several times daily or occasionally once in contact with the audience. In this respect, greeting becomes one of the expressive acts mostly used in our daily life to acknowledge the presence of the addressee(s). The present work investigates the speech act of greetings in Cameroon Social Media. It aims at analyzing the most frequent verbal behaviours (greeting) associated with Francophone Cameroonian greetings which occur on Social Media platforms. The method used to elicit data were screenshots of messages on Meta (hereafter Facebook), WhatsApp and Messenger for statistical analysis. The corpus of the study forms a total of 436 both individual and group chats collected between 2020-2022. The results indicate that the type of greeting 'good morning' which is under time-bound greeting is the most frequently used form in Cameroon social media.

Keywords: speech act of greeting, Meta, Social Media, e-greeting, social status

1. Introduction

The different online applications that arose with the social web have proved their inalienable relevance in the world of social interactions among individuals in and out of Cameroon. In attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, but also perform actions via those utterances (Austin, 1962). Some authors have given strong interest to linguistic features (Agwetang & Florine, 2021; Dąbrowska, 2018; Nouhou, 2022; Nouhou & Tabe, 2021; Tabe, 2018, 2023) to demystify language use on Social Media (SM). This paper uses three social network platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Messenger). Facebook is a social networking site that permits its users to send messages, create profiles, upload photos and videos. It also promotes and facilitates interaction between friends, family and colleagues. WhatsApp is a cross-platform with immediate messaging system that uses Internet to share texts, images, documents, audio and video messages among users who have installed the app on their devices like mobiles, PCs and tablets. Messenger is a platform used to send messages and exchange photos, videos, stickers, audios, files and also react to other users' messages and interact with bots. Among the forms of language communication engaged on SM, greeting words and greeting questions are a universally occurring phenomenon. Meirbekov, Elikbayev, Meirbekov & Temirbaev (2015) hold that greeting strategies are mostly found to be prime "access rituals" in communication processes, as they facilitate initiating a conversation (p.268). The study of the speech act of greeting should give preference to a first useful method of exploring the structure of a speech community and a social group (Ahmad, 2015). In addition, the way people greet tells a lot about the person's personality, knowledge, politeness and social status (Nemani & Nasekh, 2013).

The various ways of expressing greetings as language behaviour may anchor in the context, the social background, and the space and familiarities of the interlocutors involved on SM platforms. Researchers like Goffman (1971) and Felecan (2015) tried to give a precise definition to it. In this respect, Goffman (1971) socially defined greeting as a conversational act that is utilized by the speaker to establish relations and to acknowledge different social status, while Felecan (2015) conveys that greeting is a communicative behaviour used by the speaker to express feeling and attitude towards the addressee. Besides, Nilsson, Norrby, Bohman and Skogmyr (2020) state that greeting is the resource for indexing the degree of social distance between interlocutors and thereby manifests recurring cultural patterns (p. 21).

Moreover, some linguists have considered greeting as a speech act that reflects a particular culture because it shows

specific cultural values (Jibreen, 2010); a way of expressing pleasure or establishing contact between individuals (Harnich & Bach, 1979); a speech event with pragmatic meaning and the meaning in turn is affected by cultural perspectives (Fieg & Mortlock, 1989). These assumptions underpin a clear social value shared among speech communities. While addressers and addressees should be aware of these social rituals so that interactions function smoothly through different purposes from one social group to another, greetings become formulaic in nature as far as linguistics is concerned. Therefore, in every context or situation, greetings are expected when a person runs into or passes by someone, he/she knows well. The case shown on SM platforms may appear as a situational conversation among the interlocutors in their chats in such a way that a context is created for the interactions to take place. In this respect, all of the interlocutors are familiar in one way or the other. Considering the above discussion, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the most frequently used forms of greetings in Cameroon social media?
2. What are the linguistic functions of greeting in Cameroon social media?

In addition, this study is therefore, based on the premises/hypotheses that the most frequently used types of greetings in Cameroon social media is “good morning” and “good afternoon,” and the linguistic functions of greeting in Cameroon Social Media are among others, contact establishment, geographical area distinction, and appraisal of the degree of relationships.

Based on the above research questions and hypotheses, the present research paper offers insights on the speech acts analysis of the occurring greetings in Cameroon social media.

2. Theoretical Framework

Austin (1962) considers greetings as a kind of performative; it has to do with behaviour towards others to display attitudes and feelings. Searle (1969) calls them expressions. The expressive act creates an interpersonal relation between speaker and hearer. Searle (1969) and Searle and Vanderveken (1986) recommend that English greeting be analysed as an example of expressive type of speech act (p. 216). There are various forms of greetings, however, Halliday’s (1973, 1978) verbal forms of greeting strategies which constitute time-free greetings, time-bound greetings and seasonal (in)formal greetings is adopted in this research paper. The following are the suggested forms of speech act of greetings put forward by Halliday:

1. Time-free greetings:

Halliday’s theory stipulates that under time-free greetings, the speaker may use expressions such as the following:

- How do you do?
- Hello, How are you?
- Hi, How are you?
- Glad to meet you!
- (It's) Good to see you (again)!
- (How/very) Nice to see you (again)
- Long time no see you!
- (Ah) X [any first name or honorific], Just the person I wanted to see/was looking for/was after.

2. Time-bound greetings: daily formal greetings.

The words frequently used under time-bound greetings as put forward by Halliday are:

1. Morning: Good Morning
2. Afternoon: Good afternoon.
3. Evening: Good evening
4. Day: Good day.
5. Night: Good night.

3. Seasonal (in) formal greetings

Halliday’s (1973) suggestions for seasonal greetings include:

1. Happy New Year!
2. Happy Anniversary!
3. Happy Easter!

4. Happy birthday (to you)!

5. Many happy returns (of the day)!

6. (A) Merry Christmas (to you)!

7. Many happy returns (of your birthday)! (Halliday, 1979 as cited in Nodoushan, 2006, pp 9-10; Jibreen, 2010, p. 4).

In keeping with Halliday, Levinson (1983) thinks that greetings are time constrained, so that *good morning* can be used only in the morning and *good evening* can be employed only in the evening. Halliday's (1979) taxonomy of time-bound greeting brings in diverse uses of these greetings such as formal and informal ones. We have very informal (Hi), informal (Hello) and the more formal greetings (good morning, good afternoon, good evening).

Accordingly, Halliday's (1973, 1978) verbal forms of greeting techniques will be helpful in the analysis of the various forms of greetings in this paper. The Cameroonian virtual community comes from diverse backgrounds and we may have both formal and informal greeting forms. Following what is presented in Halliday's theory, all the important events that can happen in human life have a special greeting form that needs to be used adequately. Therefore, it is helpful in this research paper because most of the expressions that characterize this framework are found in the data collected. The paper will examine time-free greetings expressions such as Hi, Hello, How are you? How are you doing? Concerning time-bound greetings, the three periods of the day namely morning, afternoon and evening will be considered and finally under the (in)formal greetings, the expressions like happy new day, happy new year, happy celebration, happy weekend, and happy birthday will be analyzed.

3. Review of Related Literature

The speech act of greeting has been studied in many fields such as sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, sociology, and anthropology. However, there is a bulk of researchers who investigated the importance of speech act of greeting and its rituals in different cultures. Goffman (1971), for instance, sees greeting exchanges as access rituals consisting of two types, passing greetings and engaging greetings which function as a switch that opens or closes relations (p.79). He further emphasizes that greeting exchanges serve to re-establish social relations, acknowledge status, and guarantee safe passages when performed between strangers. Meanwhile, Emery (2000) investigates the phenomenon of greeting, congratulating, and commiserating in Omani Arabic and discovers that greetings are used to establish identity and affirm solidarity (p.201). It is worth to note that greetings are "...extremely important strategies for the negotiation and control of social identity and social relationships between participants in a conversation" (Akindele, 2007). Akindele (2007) listed three kinds of greetings namely, temporal greetings which Dzameshie (2002) tags it 'Time-of-day' greetings, inquiries about health which he calls 'How-are-you greetings' and the valedictory greetings which he refers to 'Ways of parting'.

Focusing on the forms, Firth (1973) is of the opinion that greetings are rituals which consist of verbal and nonverbal forms. Verbal forms may be one of the three linguistic units: question (How do you do?), interjection (Hello) or affirmation (Good morning) and non-verbals are related to body language (also cited in Rababa'h & Malkawi, 2012, P. 15). While Laver (1981) proposes that greeting exchanges have three components: formulaic phrases, address forms, and phatic communion (p.303). Furthermore, Laver views greeting exchanges as routine rituals which serve to preserve "face".

In addition, some researchers study greetings in the sociolinguistic perspective or as a speech act which focuses on traditional forms (Fadipe, 1970; Irvine, 1974; Egblewogbe, 1990; Ameka, 1991; Dzameshie, 2002). Also, Meirbekov et al. (2015) investigate the sociolinguistic aspects of the speech act of greeting and its differences regarding forms of greeting in the Kazakh and English languages. Their results indicate that social contexts influence the speech act of greeting in both Kazakh and English languages, and that each language has its own peculiarities and some similarities (p.267). Nodoushan (2007) carries out a study to compare English and Persian greeting forms in movies and other video or audio media and comes up with two patterns for English greetings and five patterns for Persian greetings. Facts gleaned from greeting in nine school textbooks content intended for use in Indonesian secondary schools by Inawati (2016) show that less various types of greetings were presented in the textbook and meta-pragmatic information was limited.

Other researchers contrary to Searle (1976), such as Kasper (1989) and Wilkins (1976) see greetings as semantically or propositionally empty, and frozen or formulaic routine items. Zem, Yasinta and Lay (2021) investigate the use of various greetings among students of Musamus Merauke University, by using descriptive qualitative methods. Data consisted of variety of greetings from the students' discourse. Findings of the study show that college students of Musamus University used greetings to build friendship. Different studies have been conducted on greetings in various cultures. 'Greeting' according to Austin's classification (1962) is considered as a kind of performative behaviour towards

others to exhibit attitudes and feelings. Ferguson (1967) examines the use of interpersonal verbal routines such as greetings and thanks as a universal phenomenon of human languages, related in some way to the widespread ‘greeting’ behaviour of other animals. Examples from Syrian Arabic, American English, and other languages are used to show differing patterns of structure and use. He considered greeting expressions as an example of "a politeness formula" (P. 137).

Al-Abdul Halim (1994) explores greetings in Jordanian Arabic and affirms that the relation between the speakers and the addressees affects the choice of the right greeting. In another work, Ebsworth, Bodman and Carpenter (1996) found that greetings are complex speech acts which involve wide range of behaviours. Similarly, important works have been done in Cameroon Social Media such as identity construction (Anchimbe, 2010); orality and literacy (Tabe, 2008); linguistic features (Tabe, 2012); e-sentence (Tabe, 2013a). In addition, Tabe (2013b) looked at the impact of technologies in language teaching and learning. She equally examines humour (Tabe, 2016); multilingualism (Tabe, 2017); e-morphology (Tabe, 2018) as well as code-mixing and code-switching (Tabe, 2023). Tabe and Faissam (2018) addressed greetings recorded from Fulfulde native students in the Department of English language and Literature of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences in the University of Maroua. The analysis was in four stages: the creation of the atmosphere, the recognition of familiarity, the routinely Fulfulde-specific flow and change of topic. Some authors have noticed contradictions and hate speech in Cameroon social media (Fombo, 2021; Ngouo, 2020; Tasah & Sawalda, 2021). Findings obtained from Fombo (2021) reveal four types of speech acts used by activists which include: declarative, commissives, directives and assertives. Ngouo found that there are two opposing views on Facebook: the separatists’ and the pro-unionists’ positions. While Tasah and Sawalda’s data unveil that the majority of hate speech by Cameroonian activists centered on the incitement of violence, ethnic group criticism, accusation, threat, and challenge, the laying of more emphasis on ethnic group criticism and offence.

The above literature review shows that interest has been shown on greetings both in English and other languages. Yet, previous studies on greeting in Computer Mediated Communication registered both in Cameroon and abroad are sparse. Therefore, the present research paper will focus on the speech act of greeting in Cameroon Social Media.

4. Methodology

This research focuses on a corpus gathered from francophone Cameroonian speakers of English on Messenger (MSG), WhatsApp (WHAP) and Facebook (FBK). The data were collected from different naturally occurring chats ranging from 2020 to 2022. The data were analyzed to identify the relevant pragmatic features of greetings along with their social meaning. The study is descriptive as it points out the multiple faceted occurrences of greeting nature among the informants. The data drawn from Facebook and WhatsApp represents the group chats among colleagues on one hand, and friends on the other hand. Furthermore, it comprises individuals’ chats on FBK and chats between the researcher and colleagues on MSG. The primary data in this work comprises 436 screenshots. The corpus was drawn from 243 participants among which are 152 males and 91 females. The data were coded in this manner: WhatsApp (WHAP01 to WHAP300), Facebook (FBK01 to FBK106) and Messenger (MSG01 to MSG30). For confidentiality, it is worth to note that all names on the chats have been deleted. The composition of the corpus is detailed in table 1 that follows:

Table 1. Corpus composition

Type of data	Number	Participants	Year(s) of collection
WHAP chats	300	Purposive sample of Francophone Cameroonians	2020-2022
FBK chats	106	Purposive sample of Francophone Cameroonians	2020-2022
MSG chats	30	Purposive sample of Francophone Cameroonians	2020-2022
Total	436		

Table 1 shows that the data is composed of 300 WHAP chats, 106 FBK chats and 30 MSG chats that were collected from 2020 to 2022 forming a total of 436. Figure 1 presents some samples of screenshots.

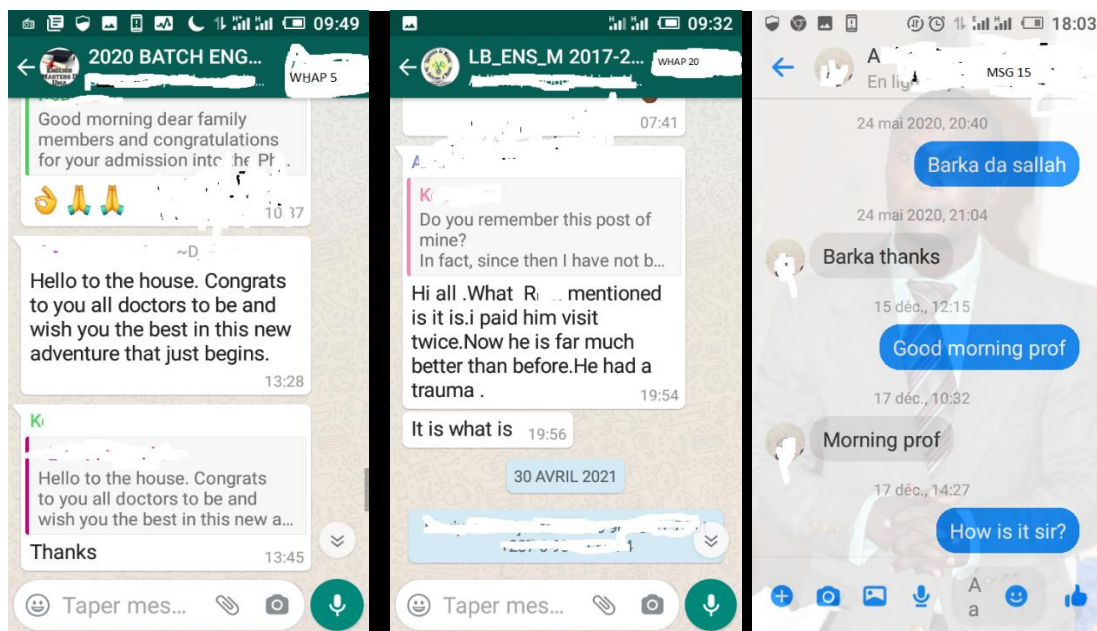


Figure 1. Sample of data

More screenshots can be found in the appendix.

5. Data Analysis

The three types and forms of greetings namely time-free greetings, time-bound greetings and seasonal (in) formal greetings were discovered in the data under study. Table 2 presents the types of greetings and their frequencies.

Table 2. General distribution of greeting per type on Cameroon social media

Types of greetings	Time-free greetings	Time-bound greetings			Seasonal (in)formal greetings	Total
		Morning	Afternoon	Evening		
Social network types	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	frequency	frequency	
WhatsApp	24	15	11	7	4	61
Facebook	1	0	0	0	4	5
Messenger	2	8	2	0	1	13
Total	27(35.06%)	23(29.87%)	13(16.88%)	7(9.09%)	9(11.68%)	79
		43(55.84%)				

Statistics drawn from table 2 indicate that time-bound related greetings is the most preferred greeting used by francophone Cameroonians in these SM platforms with an overall total of 43 (55.84%) occurrences. Time-free greetings follows with 27(35.06%) and then seasonal (in)formal greetings occupy the last position with 9(11.68%). The overall number of occurrence of greeting is at the top position on WHAP as it occurs 61 times with 33 time-bound greetings, 24 time-free greetings and 4 seasonal (in)formal greetings respectively. It is followed by MSG platform With 9 time-bound greetings, 2 time-free greetings and 1 seasonal (in)formal greetings used. And lastly, FBK counts 4 seasonal (in)formal greeting and 1 time-free greeting used, but time-bound greeting is inexistent. Globally, the type of greeting ‘good morning’ which is under contact establishment greeting is the most frequently used form with 15 times of occurrences. Details on the types of greetings are given in the following subsections.

5.1 Time-free Greetings

The paramount function of greeting in linguistics relies on the act of communication in which human beings intentionally make their presence known to each other, to show attention. Table 2 below displays time- free greetings used in Cameroon social media along with their frequencies.

Table 3. Distribution of time-free greetings

Types of time-free greetings	Frequencies
Hi	13(46.42%)
Hello	6(21.43%)
How are you?	3(10.72%)
How is your family?	2(7.15%)
How are you doing?	1(3.57%)
My regards to all the members of this house	1(3.57%)
My regards to your wife	1(3.57%)
I salute you	1(3.57%)
Total	28

From table 3 above, it can be seen that, the term ‘hi’ is mostly preferred in the participants’ time-free greetings speech acts with a rate of 13(46.42%). The second frequently employed greeting type is ‘hello’ with the frequency of 6(21.43%). How are you? Is the third type of time-free greeting used with 3(10.72%) and How is your family? is classified at the fourth 2(7.15%) position. Other expressions like ‘How are you doing?’, ‘My regards to all the members of this house’, ‘My regards to your wife’ and ‘I salute you’ are last with the same percentage of 3.57% each. Consider extracts with forms of time-free greetings that were found in Cameroon Social Media:

- (1) *Hi* to all I share this point of view. Money will not be our representative dear colleagues! B... may swear the grown so as to represent us (WHAP 26-2021-male)
- (2) Congratulations to all of you / *hi* big, long time. Where have you been posted? / popopopo! Mon petit. Are you there? (WHAP 52-2021-male)
- (3) *How are you* J... / Fine too. How are studies? Did you finish the continuous assessment? (WHAP 87-2021-male)
- (4) *Hi* family! My health now step by step / K... come and listen to the commandments sent by your man Y... (WHAP105-2022-male)
- (5) Thanks bro, *how are you?* *I'm fine sir* / *How is your family?* / *All is well* / that's great (WHAP 107-2022-male)
- (6) *Hello* / good evening everyone / can somebody help me with a sample of an article? / Good evening C... (WHAP 114-2022-male)
- (7) *Hi* bro have you met your principal today? (WHAP 126-2022-male)
- (8) *Hi* sir. Please don't tell people that I travelled to Douala. Up we do not reach Figuil / ok (WHAP 127-2022-male)
- (9) *My regards to all* the members of this house / you are welcome PhD I don't feel G., P..., K..., where are they? (WHAP 155-2021-male)
- (10) *hellooooo everyone*. Anyone with scheme of work 3e and 4e anné industriel please? / *hi* colleagues, please , can someone help me with fourth sequence questions or 5 eme and 5 eme? (WHAP 213-2022-male)

According to Searle's (1976) *expressive* category of the illocutionary speech act, its purpose is to express the speaker's attitude and feelings. Therefore it engages an addresser calling the attention of an individual or a group by an opening speech act such as ‘*hi*’ (WHAP 26-2021-male), ‘*hello*’ (WHAP 114-2022-male), ‘*how are you*’ (WHAP 87-2021-male) and shows a sort of happiness to see or meet someone. The addressee(s) in turn express feelings through an informative act as ‘*I am fine sir*’, ‘*all is well*’ (WHAP 107-2022-male), ‘*am fine and you*’, ‘*I am well*’ (MSG 20-2020-male). It appears that the dialogue can be in pair and among friends as in ‘*hi big*’ (WHAP 52-2021-male), ‘*hi bro*’ (WHAP 126-2022-male) and ‘*hello S...*’ (MSG 30-2021-male) or among a student and a superior/teacher as in ‘*hi sir*’ (WHAP 127-2022-male). It can also be among a group of interactants who are friends, classmates or colleagues as in ‘*hello to you all*’ (FBK 45-2020-male), ‘*hi colleagues*’ (WHAP 213-2022-male), ‘*hi family*’ (WHAP105-2022-male), ‘*my regards to all*’ (WHAP 155-2021-male). It should be noted that ‘hello’ and ‘hi’ mean the same thing but there is a slight difference in formality in such a way that ‘hi’ is more informal than ‘hello’ when you meet somebody.

5.2 Time-bound Related Greetings

Another function of greeting which is also relevant is to suggest a type of relationship (usually cordial) or social status (formal or informal) between individuals or group of people in contact with each other. The data obtained reveal that time-bound greetings indicate contact that is established with colleagues, friends, mates or neighbours. This form of greeting found in the data are listed under the three main periods of the day which fall under Halliday's (1973) classification namely, morning, afternoon and evening. Table 4 presents in details contact establishment related greetings.

Table 4. Distribution of time-bound related greetings

Period	Time-bound greetings	Frequencies
Morning	Good morning	5(11.63%)
	Good morning prof	4(9.31%)
	Good morning dear colleagues	3(6.98%)
	Good morning everyone	2(4.66%)
	Morning sir	2(4.66%)
	Good morning my dear	2(4.66%)
	Morning to you colleagues	1(2.32%)
	Morning dear	1(2.32%)
	Good morning dear mates	1(2.32%)
	Good morning great lady	1(2.32%)
Afternoon	Good afternoon	9(20.93%)
	Good afternoon everyone	1(2.32%)
	Afternoon	1(2.32%)
	Good afternoon prof	1(2.32%)
	Good afternoon sir	1(2.32%)
Evening	Good evening fellow colleagues	1(2.32%)
	Good evening dear batch mates and colleagues	1(2.32%)
	Good evening dear	1(2.32%)
	Good evening man of God	1(2.32%)
	Evening my dear	1(2.32%)
	Good evening in this house	1(2.32%)
	Good evening little sister	1(2.32%)
Total		43

As shown in table 4, there is an overall of 43 occurrences of time-bound greetings that were used by francophone Cameroonians on social media platforms. The most frequently utilized form under this section is ‘good afternoon’ as it appears 9 times. ‘Good morning’ comes at the second position with 5 occurrences, followed by ‘Good morning prof’ 4(9.31%) and ‘Good morning dear colleagues’ 3(6.98%). The rest of the expressions are used once or twice. By observation from the statistics above, most of the speech acts of greetings in Cameroon social media do not mention the name, the status or the group of the addressee(s). More details on time-bound greetings are given below.

5.2.1 Morning

As far as greeting is concerned, those that indicate the morning time and found in Cameroon social Media include the italicized items in the following excerpts:

- (11) *Good morning dear colleagues and batch mates*, I know that tight is our budget as teachers, but remember our pledges... (WHAP 29-2021-male)
- (12) *Morning to you colleagues*. You know that I am in the bush. No network here unless I am in town. / It will be bro (WHAP 86-2021-male)
- (13) *Morning dear*, could please edit this / *good morning*, ok but very busy this week, maybe next week / I wish to submit it by Thursday (WHAP 140-2022-male)
- (14) *good morning dear mates*, can anybody help me with the venue, time and timetable of the seminar that begins tomorrow? Please (WHAP 171-2021-male)
- (15) *good morning*, how are you doing brother and your family? / hello brother, I am fine and you? I am also fine thanks (WHAP 172-2022-male)
- (16) *Good morning dear colleagues*, can someone help me with the contacts of E... urgent please (WHAP 182-2022-male)
- (17) *Good morning*, I’m quite well and you? / I’m ok my junior sister... (WHAP 197-2022-female/male)
- (18) *Good morning my dear / evening / how are you doing Mr A...? / am ok / Great* (MSG 29-2022-male) b

Facts gleaned from the above instances show that time-bound greetings display a certain form of contact establishment among colleagues or mates which demonstrates that they may share the same environment or simply, they are interconnected under a group chat on one of the selected social network sites. It is also worth noticing that the form of greeting observed here brings in an irreversible condition to be met before such greeting can be performed, that is, it shows clearly in which period of the day the interlocutors find themselves during their conversations. This is proven through the following: ‘*Good morning dear colleagues and batch mates*’ (WHAP 29-2021-male) ‘*Morning to you colleagues*’ (WHAP 86-2021-male), ‘*good morning dear mates*’ (WHAP 161-2022-male). In these examples, one

cannot doubt that it is morning time because this speech act can only be said within this period of the day.

Furthermore, it is crystal clear that some greetings speech acts among the selected examples above communicate an appraisal of relationship degree. In the examples ‘*Good morning my dear*’ (MSG 29-2022-male) and ‘*Morning dear*’ (13), it is possible to see a close relationship between interlocutors. In all the instances above, the interactants share either a common geographical or cultural background to the extent that the hearer is familiar or known to the speaker depending on the context of the utterance.

5.2.2 Afternoon

Some greetings clearly indicate a given time of the day. In this respect there are those that show the afternoon time and exist in Cameroon social Media. Some instances of these have been italicized in the extracts below.

- (19) *Good afternoon everyone* / Waouh i got one from English Language and literature L..., he will be of great help oh (WHAP 110-2021-male)
- (20) *Good afternoon*, this is a process, it may be all through this year, every discussion related to what is mentioned above / morning ok / you can do the same on Messenger (WHAP 121-2021-male)
- (21) *Good afternoon* / *Good afternoon* my father, how are madame and homonym? / They are fine (WHAP 122-2021-male)
- (22) *good afternoon* / *Afternoon*, very busy now with the exam / courage when possible / I don't (WHAP 123-2021-male)
- (23) *Good afternoon*, still waiting for screenshots / Gud evenx I told u that my phone cannot do the screenshots / sorry, I forgot it's ok (WHAP 129-2022-male)
- (24) *Good afternoon*, still waiting for screenshots / happy New Year... Sorry I ooh I completely forgot ... (WHAP 130-2022-male/female)
- (25) *Good afternoon*, still waiting for screenshots / ok sir I will do my best, I was busy (WHAP 138-2022-male)
- (26) thanks and sale to you / *good afternoon* still waiting for screenshots / hello (WHAP 173-2022-male)
- (27) *Good afternoon prof* / *good afternoon sir*, it has been so long / really! So how is the family doing? / the family is fine, how is your own family?... (MSG 03-2021-male)

A context-dependent rule is applicable in the performance of greeting among individuals be it face to face, on the telephone call or simply as the case under study, on Social Media, that is, the written forms. Greetings which show that it is afternoon when it is said, also abound in Cameroon Social Media. Their plentitude may be explained through the frequencies of encounters among the interlocutors or through the relevance/emergency of the information to be shared within the afternoon period. In this respect, ‘*Good afternoon*’ in (20), (21), and (22) and ‘*afternoon*’ in (22) indicate clearly the time within which the conversation is happening, and that the use of this form of greeting during an inappropriate time will be irrelevant.

5.2.3 Evening

Evening is also a period of the day which recommends special form of greeting demonstrating that we are in the evening. Greeting related to evening found in Cameroon Social media are contained in the instances that follows:

- (28) *Good evening* fellow colleagues. We are all saddened by the new of the death of our colleague. Be strong and may the almighty grant us courage ... (WHAP 15-2021-male)
- (29) *Good evening* dear batch mates and colleagues... (WHAP 77-2021-male)
- (30) *Good evening* dear! Please I don't really understand your request. What do I have to do? / I'm looking for Francophone's discussion in English on social media / ok I will see what I can do (WHAP 124-2021-male/female)
- (31) *Good evening* man of God / *evening* my dear. How was the day? I am in Doukoula like this. Greet your wife for me / Hi bro have you met your principal today? (WHAP 126-2022-male)
- (32) *good evening* in this house. Are we supposed to pay school fee for this seminar? (WHAP 185-2021-male)
- (33) *Good evening* little sister, it's been a long time, how are you and the job? I hope you are well? Greet me also children. *Good night* (WHAP 22-2022-male)

In the above examples, it appears that some closeness among the interlocutors is shown again as one can perceive it in ‘*Good evening little sister*’ (33), ‘*evening my dear*’ (31). Moreover, the same pattern analysed under morning greeting which entails that there is a sort of contact establishment among immediate or far colleagues and mates occurred in some instances such as ‘*Good evening fellow colleagues*’ (28), ‘*Good evening dear batch mates and colleagues*’ (29)

and 'good evening in this house' (32).

5.3 Seasonal (In) Formal Greetings

In the data obtained under seasonal (in)formal greetings, a kind of happiness is shown. Happiness is generally a positive emotional state characterized by feelings of joy, satisfaction, contentment and fulfilment. In the case of the data collected for this research paper, it is realized that the expressions used to show a state of happiness are related to special happenings or events such as a celebration, a new year, a new day as well as a weekend. The table that follows presents the (in) formal greetings and their frequencies.

Table 5. Seasonal (In) formal greetings

Greeting types	Frequencies
Happy new year	2(22.22%)
Happy new day	1(11.11%)
Happy and prosperous new year	1(11.11%)
Happy celebration	1(11.11%)
Happy weekend	1(11.11%)
Happy birthday	1(11.11%)
Best day	1(11.11%)
Have a wonderful day	1(11.11%)
Total	9

It is shown in table 5 that (in)formal greetings are discovered in Cameroon social Media but in a low frequency with an overall total of 9 occurrences. The expression 'happy new year' is used twice and the rest 'happy new day', 'happy and prosperous new year', 'happy celebration', 'happy weekend', 'happy birthday', 'best day', 'have a wonderful day' are used once. Let's consider the excerpts below:

- (34) *Happy new day* with the Lord. I love you all and stay blessed / thank you very much P...be blessed also (WHAP 43-2021-male)
- (35) hi bro! *happy new year*. I'm posted in Kaikai Bilingual High School (WHAP 65-2021-male)
- (36) *happy celebration of the international women's day* to all our beautiful colleagues. No excess permitted / thanks R... (WHAP 202-2022-male/female)
- (37) *happy week end* / big heart! / ahahahaha / egoistic / this is the reflection of our curriculum (WHAP 234-2022-male)
- (38) *hbd* to you mom please help me wish my dear mother a happy birthday who has had another year. I wish you love, money, health, prosperity etc I love you mommy (FBK 11-2020-male)
- (39) Already at my new post. *Happy New Year* and courage to my co-laureates ENS/ENSET 2020 (FBK 57-2021-male)
- (40) *happy and prosperous New Year 2021* to all of you. May God the almighty grant you with new positions and blessings for his glory... (FBK 58-2021-male)
- (41) *best day* to the chair / thanks bro. enjoy it too (FBK 94-2021-male)
- (42) that is great congratulations / thanks / *have a wonderful day* and my regards to your family / thanks same to you (MSG 18-2022-male)

Following Searle's (1976) *expressive* speech act, situational attitude expressed by the speaker indicates a state of happiness and this happiness becomes a shared pleasure towards friends and colleagues in such a way that one cannot deny it. This is revealed through the following: '*Happy new day*' (34), '*happy new year*' (35), '*happy celebration of the international women's day*' (36). To paraphrase Goffman (1971), greetings help people understand their position with each other, so when someone wishes happy New Year or anniversary, it means that the person has a good relationship with you so that he/she can share any happy or bad event with you.

6. Discussion

This research paper offers the three forms of greetings put forward by Halliday (1973) related to time-free greetings, time-bound greetings and seasonal (in)formal greetings. Searle (1976) and Searle and Vanderveken (1985) analyze greetings as an example of the expressive type of speech act, aimed at the "courteous indication of recognition" of the other party. In the above examples, Searle's (1976) *expressive* category of the illocutionary speech act is confirmed, since it was demonstrated that the informants intentionally make their presence known to each other, to show attention which shows an act of recognition of their counterparts, friends and others. If the work by Tabe and Faissam (2018) shows that there are four stages in which greeting functions from the conversations performed by Fulfulde native students in the Department of English language and Literature of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences in the University of Maroua: the creation of the atmosphere, the recognition of familiarity, the routinely Fulfulde-specific flow

and change of topic, this research paper shows not only one of the aspect of their findings relatively to 'the recognition of familiarity', but also 'to establish contact' and to 'express a state of happiness'. Findings discovered by Zem, Yasinta and Lay (2021) falls in the same line since the study shows that college students of Musamus University used greetings to build friendship.

Furthermore, the findings are in consistency with previous study (Firth, 1973) where the verbal forms such as interjection 'hello' and the affirmation 'good morning' are shown. It is also indicated that time is a factor that can restrict the choice of a particular greeting. There is a discrepancy between this work which reveals a close relationship among friends and colleagues and the one of Nilsson, Norrby, Bohman and Skogmyr (2020, p.1) which state that greeting is rather the resource for indexing the degree of social distance between interlocutors and thereby manifests recurring cultural patterns.

7. Application and Implication of Findings

The main aim of the present research paper was to address the forms and functions of the most occurring greetings in Cameroon social media. The major practical contribution of the findings in this study is that it provides much needed empirical data to exploit in the domain of internet pragmatics and sociolinguistics. It has also contributed to the description of e-greeting in Cameroon Social Media, and future research could derive similar implication from most of this study's findings. In addition, this study has yielded findings that indicate values subscribed by the interactants as manifested in their language use, providing tangible nature of knowledge that can be used in the real world. The daily use of greetings in social media has increased so much that it is slowly injecting an inflection of similar greeting behaviour in face-to-face contexts and this leads to sociable behaviour and improvements in well-being. The greeting ritual being an important communicative skill, this study may also have implications for pedagogy. Social Media greetings extend greetings and socialization beyond the real world and/or classroom context. The constant engagement of students and teachers in online greetings can facilitate the teaching and learning of greetings and socialization to students. Online and face-to-face greetings can be examined in classrooms in search for similarities and differences. Social media greetings also amplify familiarity and identity among people. It can be applicable as the recognition of familiarity, the establishment of contact among individuals, the state of joy to interact with pairs or acquaintances which requires one to express inclusion, need and affection. In this sense, the researcher believes that this research undergoes essentially both theoretical and practical implications for all who are in the field of pragmatics in general and especially for scholars. This study not only provides new knowledge in values reflected in language use, but also serves as a foundation upon which future studies in this area in Cameroon is possible.

8. Conclusion

This research paper, guided by Halliday's (1973) classification of greetings has explored e-greeting in Cameroon Social Media. Results show that this research identified time-bound related greetings as the most frequent form of greeting used in Cameroon social media with an overall total of 43 (55.84%) occurrences. The dominant medium used for communication among the three social network sites under this study is WhatsApp with the highest time-bound related greetings prominence, which is 41 occurrences. It is followed by Messenger which proffers 9 occurrences.

A few areas surfaced as suggested areas for further studies. Therefore, the recommendations are as follows: this research paper has not handled all perspectives of greetings. It can be expanded by the Pragmatic/Sociolinguistic study of greeting and politeness, greeting and gender or greeting and level of education, by including the age factor. It is also important to reconsider Anglophone and Francophone Cameroonian users of Social Media as the informants.

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Appendix 2: Time-free greetings

- (1) *Hi* all. What R... mentioned is it is. I paid him visit twice. Now he is far much better than before. He had a trauma. (WHAP 20-2021-male)
- (2) *Hi* to all I share this point of view. Money will not be our representative dear colleagues! B... may swear the grown so as to represent us (WHAP 26-2021-male)
- (3) Congratulations to all of you / *hi* big, long time. Where have you been posted? / popopopo! Mon petit. Are you there? (WHAP 52-2021-male)
- (4) *Hi* to all. I heard that the list is out / possible, but the chair is not around for us to check from the dprtmnt U may ask ur informant to give d list Y... (WHAP 55-20121-male)
- (5) *hi* bro! happy new year. I'm posted in Kaikai Bilingual High School (WHAP 65-2021-male)
- (6) *Hi* to all. I am really thankful to every in this house. I unfortunately, had a second accident. Fortunately, just injuries on my left leg, arm and above the eye. (WHAP 79-2021-male)
- (7) *How are you* J.../ Fine too. How are studies? Did you finish the continuous assessment? (WHAP 87-2021-male)
- (8) *Hi* family! My health now step by step / K... come and listen to the commandments sent by your man Y... (WHAP105-2022-male)

Appendix 3: Time-bound greetings

- (1) *Good morning dear colleagues and batch mates*, I know tight is our budget as teachers, but remember our pledges... (WHAP 29-2021-male)
- (2) *Morning to you colleagues*. You know that I am in the bush. No network here unless I am in town. / It will be bro (WHAP 86-2021-male)
- (3) *Good morning* prof, you can do the same on Messenger / okay doc (WHAP117-2022-male)
- (4) *good morning* colleague / *Good morning* Mr S... / how are you doing? / I'm doing well bro and you (WHAP 136-2022-male)
- (5) *Morning* dear, could please edit this / *good morning*, ok but very busy this week, maybe next week / I wish to submit it by Thursday (WHAP 140-2022-male)
- (6) *Good morning* prof, you can do the same on Messenger / ok but now am very busy with the end of 1st term. Your work will wait (WHAP 143-2022-female)
- (7) *Good morning everyone* / *Morning* Mr H... are *yu* at school? / don't be late to school please (WHAP 148-2022-male)
- (8) *Morning sir*, please could send help me with quiz questions on bilingualism day? / *good morning*, I think it is too late to do something now (WHAP 161-2022-male)

Appendix 4: Seasonal (in)formal greetings

- (1) *Happy new day* with the Lord. I love you all and stay blessed / thank you very much P...be blessed also (WHAP 43-2021-male)
- (2) hi bro! *happy new year*. I'm posted in Kaikai Bilingual High School (WHAP 65-2021-male)
- (3) *happy celebration of the international women's day* to all our beautiful colleagues. No excess permitted / thanks R... (WHAP 202-2022-male/female)
- (4) *happy week end* / big heart! / ahahahaha / egoistic / this is the reflection of our curriculum (WHAP 234-2022-male)
- (5) *hbd* to you mom please help me wish my dear mother a happy birthday who has had another year. I wish you love, money, health, prosperity etc I love you mommy (FBK 11-2020-male)
- (6) Already at my new post. *Happy New Year* and courage to my co-laureates ENS/ENSET 2020 (FBK 57-2021-male)
- (7) *happy and prosperous New Year 2021* to all of you. May God the almighty grant you with new positions and blessings for his glory... (FBK 58-2021-male)
- (8) *best day* to the chair / thanks bro. enjoy it too (FBK 94-2021-male)