

## A Pragmatic Analysis of Time and Circumstance Greetings among the Yoruba

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### Abstract

This study focuses on the pragmatic analysis of greetings among the Yorùbá people. It aims at classifying greetings in relation to contextuality and help to present them as a socio-pragmatic tool for successful communication. The objectives of this study are to present a pragmatic analysis of participants' competence in greeting encounters; solve the ambiguity in social greetings encounters; examine the politeness of greetings in relation to the linguistic element meaning; and explain the general social importance and functions of greetings in Yorùbá. The data for this study were gathered through participatory observation, non-participatory observation and interview methods. Interviews were conducted for 6 Yoruba native speakers (4 males and 2 females) residing in Ile-Ife in Osun State, Ibadan in Oyo State and OwodeYewa in Ogun State Nigeria. The Grice 1975 Co-operative principles are used for the analysis of this study. It was found that greetings in the Yorùbá cultural context are largely used to express more than social approval but express the situation and the interaction state of the interlocutors. Also, it is very hard to know the actual meaning of greetings in Yoruba except for the cultural meaning and context among these people. This study concludes that social greetings are often extended to cover cants of piety that reflect the past chivalrous daring and exploits cherished in the family line of the addressee to whom the greeting is intended.

**Keywords:** Greetings, Yoruba, Pragmatics, Politeness and Context

## 1. Introduction

Greeting expression is a phenomenon of all natural languages, though the importance attached to it is different from one language to another. Greetings can be seen as positive and negative politeness which we acquire in our native environment. However, greeting expressions in Yoruba society are seen as a social instrument used to integrate conversations. According to Duranti (1997), greetings are often believed to be one of the first verbal routines learned by children and certainly one of the first topics introduced in foreign language classes.

Genetically, Yoruba as a language belongs to the Kwa language family of Africa. The language is originally spoken by the people of Southwest of Nigeria. It should be noted that some natives are found in other countries like Cuba, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom, Brazil and the United States of America due to migration and the slave trade. According to Adeniyi (2018), the language has different dialects such as Ọ̀yọ́, Èkìtì, Ìjẹ̀bù, Rẹ̀mọ̀, Ifẹ̀, Ìjẹ̀ṣà, Àkókó, Ìkálẹ̀, Okun, Ègbá, Àwòrì, Ìgbómìnà, Ọ̀wọ̀, Ìdànrẹ̀, Ègbádò, Ìlájẹ̀, Kétu, Ọ̀ndó, Yewa, Ànàgó, Ìbòlọ̀ among others. Recent research shows that the language is spoken by over 52 million speakers in the whole world of which 50 are native speakers while about 2 million are non-native speakers.

Among the Yoruba people, context always determines the actual meaning of a greeting. They condemn the coarseness and rebellious acts that could lead to social misconduct among strangers in their society, though, strangers are warmly accommodated. And it is believed eventual learning would be undertaken by them in the right greeting direction given a little while. These greetings are numerous but undetermined (greeting expressions can take different dimensions). As communication is vital, so also greeting is crucial to Yoruba people. Nevertheless, this study will solve the ambiguity in social greeting encounters; classifies greetings in relation to contextuality and present greetings as socio-pragmatic tools for successful communication.

The purpose of this research is to identify the various greeting expressions, their uses, their social functions and their importance among the Yoruba people. It solves the ambiguity in social greeting encounters and classifies greetings in relation to contextuality. It contributes to the application of Grice Cooperative principles. It presents greetings as a socio-pragmatic tool for

successful communication. Finally, it will serve as research material for further studies on Yoruba greetings.

The greeting is universally employed as a standard social interaction facilitator. It has a social focus that has been adapted to various cultural interpretations, which in most cases have become concretized into stereotypes (Sacks 1975). In this connection, specific greetings have become identifiable with religious ceremonies, commercial enterprises, and political rallies. In certain cultures, greeting behaviour has been interpreted into interpretations that transcend the ordinary needs of social interaction. Let us consider this example cited in Elegbeleye (2005, p. 21), in the Yoruba culture of Western Nigeria, it is culturally mandatory for a child to greet his parents in the morning when they live under the same roof, for a wife to do the same to her husband and her husband's people in the morning, and for the subordinate to do the same to his superior each time they encounter one another in a workplace. The social importance of greetings among the Yoruba people is the motivation for this study.

The Yoruba people attach great importance to greeting in their culture. It is very hard to see any aspect of their lives that does not have a distinct greeting. For this reason, the Yoruba greetings are numerous. However, the scope of this study will be delimited to time and circumstances greeting among the Yoruba people.

## **2. Greetings and Greeting among the Yoruba People**

As communication is vital, so also greeting is crucial to Yoruba people. Duranti (1997) observes that the greeting ritual is an essential communicative skill in all cultures, that is greeting is a common occurrence in all cultures of different languages of the world. Greetings are conventional expressions used for welcoming people or for expressing pleasure when meeting somebody. Greetings are so important to the Yoruba people that they refer to themselves as ‘*Ọmọ káàárò ọ̀jìire*’ which means the descendants of those who greet by saying ‘good morning, and hope you woke well?’ Daramola and Jeje (1967, p.33) assert that it is obligatory for parents to teach their children how to greet politely because a child who wakes up early in the morning without greeting the elders, such child would be rebuked. On the other hand, a child that wakes up and first observes the norms associated with greetings would be highly favoured. This study,

however, places greetings on three basic factors, which are: the time of the day, the context of greeting, and the age/relationship of people involved in greeting.

Akindele (2007) argues that greetings may either be prefatory, informatory, pre-closing or closing. This means greetings can give information about time and circumstances, also, they can be used to open and end discussions. Following Elegbeleye (2005), Schleicher (2010) and Odebunmi (2013) all speech communities are well known for their specific categories of greetings related to age, status, gender, and other socio-cultural factors. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006) also affirm that greeting varies depending on regional, ethnic, gender and status factors. That is, there is no language without specific categories of greetings which differentiate their culture from one another.

According to Hudson (1996), greetings display the power and solidarity relation between speakers which signals the level of familiarity as well as the participant roles in the forthcoming interaction or dialogue. Pillet-Shore (2008) also observes greetings to be the means for soon-to-be interlocutors to move from physical co-presence into social co-presence. That is, greetings build social interactions among the interlocutors. In view of Oumarou (1997), greetings are accompanied by certain deferential terms and paralinguistic behaviours in some communities. In other words, different speech societies have their mode of greetings which are accompanied by verbal greetings in their environment.

Greetings are social instruments of politeness and relationship. Greetings play certain roles in human communities. Firth (1972), for instance, identifies three major themes of greetings and farewells: the production of attention, the identification of the interlocutor, and the reduction of anxiety in the social contract. Goody (1972) recognizes the following basic functions for greetings: to begin a series of communicative acts, to define and affirm identity and rank, and to manipulate a particular relationship for achieving particular ends. These ideas agree somewhat with Brown and Levinson's (1978) views that greetings constitute a politeness strategy. They identify two broad types of politeness strategies: positive and negative. While positive politeness satisfies a speaker's needs for approval and belonging, negative politeness serves to minimize the imposition of a face-threatening act.

Greeting indicates continuity of personal relationships and signals the recognition of the other participant as a potential agent in some activity. (Halliday and Hasan, 1985, p.63), also aligned with this submission. However, there are some greeting expressions, which are termed negative gre\eting among the Yoruba since they perform negative social functions among the users.

Adebija (1989, p. 61), identifies greetings as a major means of showing positive politeness among the Yorùbá. That is, greetings are strategies used by the Yorùbá to attract the attention of a co-interlocutor and facilitate good interactions. Those greetings must be initiated by the younger interactant when relating with elders. Also, the first meeting greetings or reunion meetings are elaborate to the extent that close interactants can extend greetings to relations, and associates who are not present at the scene of greeting.

The Yorùbá people have greeting forms for every occasion in all aspects of their lives, following Adebija, (1989); Adejumo (2010); Akindele, (2007); Biobaku, (1958); Oyetade, (1995); Schleicher, (2010) Yorùbá greetings is classified into three forms:

1. Greetings based on times, seasons, and circumstances. e.g., 'È káàárò' (Good morning).
2. Greetings based on traditional occupation or religion. e.g., 'àrìnpánitògún o' (god of iron will support you in killing animals) is a hunting greeting.
3. Situational greetings: Greetings for a pregnant woman, greetings for the new mother and the new baby, and greetings for the children of an older person whodies,e.g, 'ẹ kúewuomọ' (happy delivery).

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts Grice's 1975 Cooperative principles for the analysis. The framework of analysis for this study is called the Co-operative Politeness Hypothesis, which is found very apt in describing and analyzing the greeting expressions among the Yoruba. The Cooperative Politeness Theory in this paper is based on Grice's (1975) Cooperative principles. Grice's pragmatic theory finds application in the ethnography of greetings of the Yoruba People.

The Cooperative principle has it that conversation is usually a cooperative activity. Grice believes that at any point in a conversation, a speaker should be guided by certain maxims, such as:

Quality – speakers should say only what is true;

Quantity – speakers should say no more and no less than is required;

Relation – speakers should be relevant; and

Manner – speakers should be perspicuous, i.e. be brief, orderly and should avoid ambiguity.

Yoruba Greetings follow Gricean laws or maxims because their culture entails many cooperative interactions, which also involve politeness. Therefore, this theory is suitable for the analysis of this study. The primary function of the cooperative maxim is that of constraining the participants in the greeting conversation to make their conversation orderly, purposeful, and maximally efficient.

#### **4. Methodology**

The data for this study were gathered through participatory observation, non-participatory observation and interview methods. Interviews were conducted for 6 Yoruba native speakers (4 males and 2 females) residing in Ile-Ife in Osun State, Ibadan in Oyo State and OwodeYewa in Ogun State Nigeria. An audio recorder was used for recording greetings at different events, people's greeting interactions and discussions with informants. The Grice 1975 Co-operative principles are used for the analysis of this study.

#### **5. Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents the data and analysis for this study. It addresses the mode of greeting and the use of honorific pronouns in Yorùbá. The data for this study will be grouped into two major groups, viz: greetings of the day and circumstance greetings.

##### **Mode of Greeting in Yorùbá**

The Yorùbá group is known for their respective characteristics. Their series of dialects make it indefinable but this study focuses on the general mode. The young ones pay respect to

the elders and the pragmatic meaning can only be decoded in culture. The respect is exhibited pragmatically thus:

**Prostration:** The male ones are already equipped with this culture at a tender age. They train their young ones towards this so that they can maintain the basic cultural phenomena. The prostration is done by laying down flat. This is no way to be modified except for certain conditions. The elders are always happy for the respect and importantly, preserving the culture. In traditional and contemporary Yorùbá culture, younger male family and community members greet elders by assuming a position called 'ìdòbálè'. The traditional, full Yorùbá prostration involves the prostrator lying down almost prone with his feet extended behind his torso while the rest of his weight is propped up on both hands. This tradition is the more informal bow and touches the fingertips to the floor in front of an elder with one hand while bending slightly at the kneel.

**Kneeling:** The female ones presented their cultural heritage by kneeling for the elders. Parents transfer this to their children. The use of kneeling for elderly ones can be pragmatically decoded as means of greeting. The two kneels are used in this instance. Sometimes adults who are experienced in the culture exhibit their respect with the aid of what is called òṣùbà.

In furtherance, there are some other methods of respecting elders through greeting in some other Yoruba dialects, but the general ones are focused on this finding.

### **The Use of Honorific Pronouns**

Apart from greetings, all forms of conversations among the Yorùbá people are honorifics and culture-specific address terms, which, are referentially and pragmatically used. Yoruba is a language with a strong honorific attachment, which distributes social labels because of older or younger age. The use of *ó* and *é* depict respect which can be expressed pragmatically in terms of usages. 'O' is used as a second or third-person pronoun to index an individual in the lower or equal age bracket of the speaker. 'È' is a second-person honorific pronoun, with 'wọ̀n' or 'awọ̀n' (they) as its third-person counterpart. 'Èyin' (honorific 'you') is contrasted with 'iwọ̀' (non-honorific 'you'). 'Àwọ̀n' (third person plural pronominal 'they') is an honorific contrast to the non-honorific 'òun'. Sometimes, the choice of honorifics or non-honorifics depends on the nature

of a relationship (whether or not interlocutors are meeting for the first time), status differentials, the level of intimacy and the speakers' personal styles. The ó-notion is pragmatically used for younger ones and friends of the same peer. This is an example of sociolect in linguistics. The use is interchangeable in different contexts. Below is an example:

1. 'ẹ káàárò mà

(ẹ-notion) good morning ma

ẹ káàárò

(ẹ-notion) good morning.

Pragmatically, the uses of these notions are meant to express respect and it separates elders from their younger ones and maintains the culture. Greetings are central to everyday life in Yoruba land, everyone should be greeted, especially elders. Failure to do so will label a person as disrespectful. This is a custom among the Yoruba people.

2. *Pẹ̀lẹ̀ o* 'sorry o'

*Káàárò o/ káàárò 'good morning o/ good morning'*

*The use depends on the closeness of the addressee*

The addressee happens to be older in the context of data (2). The Yoruba people always maintain respect in society by observing these general phenomena among their neighbours.

#### a. Greetings for the Day

Period of the day	Greetings	Gloss
Morning	ẹ káàárò	'good morning'
Afternoon	ẹ kásàn-án	'good afternoon'
Evening	ẹ kúròlẹ	'good evening'
Night	ẹ káalẹ	'good evening'

The literal analysis of these greeting expressions in the above table connotes a direct meaning of the time of the day. These types of greetings are exchanged based on the time of the day among the Yoruba people. The time of the day depends on these greeting utterances. The pragmatic use of the above utterances depends on the relationship of both the addressee and the addresser. The



user can be further exchanged thus: *ẹ kààárọ sir/ẹ kààárọ ma*. This type of greeting is mostly used by the youth among the Yoruba people. The user can also tend to say *kààárọ*.

Pragmatically, it can further be used thus:

3. *'a kú ojúmọ* '   
*şé a jí dáàdáà or:* *hope we woke up well?'*   
*ẹ kààárọ, àà jíire bí?'* *good morning, hope we woke up well?'*

The meaning of these utterances is directly encoded in the hour of the day which is morning.

4. *ẹ káalẹ/ ẹ kú àşálẹ* 'good evening'

'*ẹ káalẹ*' and '*ẹ kú àşálẹ*' insinuate the same meaning in the underline form. The use depends on the stylistic competence of the user. The observation is this greeting can be either positive or negative among the Yoruba people depending on the context and circumstance.

**Circumstance Greetings**

Since pragmatics explores the 'meaning' of an utterance based on the circumstances in which it is uttered. Circumstances greetings can be used for bullying, commending efforts, showing sympathy, appreciation etc. Below are the analyses of some circumstance greetings among the Yorùbá people:

5. *pẹlẹ* 'sorry'

This greeting is different from day-to-day greetings among the Yoruba. This greeting expresses sympathy. The use of this expression is consciously applied among this tribe. The literal meaning can be decoded in the present condition of the addressee. It is termed a foul expression depending on the mutuality or relationship between the two parties. The meaning can be easily decoded when it is expressed thus: *Pẹlẹ oo*, which expresses *ikíàbòsí* (*hypocritical greeting*). The utterer might implicate meaning to the situation of the addressee. Therefore, *pẹlẹ* can have a positive or negative meaning depending on the context.

Such examples can be illustrated below:

6. A father is exchanging words with his little child:

*Father:* *ẹ pẹlẹ sà* 'sorry sir'   
*ẹ kú eré àná* *well-done for yesterday's play.*   
*ẹ sù tunkú ìmúra tèní* *also, well-done for today's preparation'*

The above greeting is not proportional to the direct meaning. The father is older than his little son still; he respected him like an elderly person. This type of expression insinuates that the son is too playful, and the father is cautioning the son. The father is teasing the son and expressing warning through these greetings.

#### 7. *Greeting*

#### *Gloss*

<i>Utterer:</i>	<i>ẹ káàbò</i>	<i>welcome</i>
<i>Addressee:</i>	<i>ẹ ẹsun</i>	<i>thank you</i>
<i>Utterer:</i>	<i>şé dáadáa lẹdẹ?</i>	<i>hope you came well?</i>
<i>Addressee:</i>	<i>a dúpé</i>	<i>we thank God</i>
<i>Utterer:</i>	<i>şé àláfià lẹwà?</i>	<i>Hope you are fine?</i>
<i>Addressee:</i>	<i>a dúpé</i>	<i>we thank God</i>
<i>Utterer:</i>	<i>omọ ñkọ?</i>	<i>how is your child?</i>
<i>Addressee:</i>	<i>alááfià</i>	<i>he/she is fine</i>
<i>Utterer:</i>	<i>ayańkọ?</i>	<i>how is your wife?</i>
<i>Addressee:</i>	<i>àlááfià</i>	<i>she is fine</i>
<i>Utterer:</i>	<i>gbogbo ẹbí lúpapọ ñkọ?</i>	<i>how is the family in general?</i>
<i>Addressee:</i>	<i>àlááfià</i>	<i>they are all fine</i>
<i>Utterer:</i>	<i>Olúwaşun</i>	<i>thank God</i>

This greeting expression in datum (5) explains the hospitality and caring of the utterer towards the addressee. It shows that the utterer is loving, considerate, concerned, and caring. Those who do not, by converse, tend to be given the opposite attributes.

#### 8. *ẹ kú ojọ męta* ‘quite an ages’

The pragmatic meaning of *ẹ kú ojọ męta* can be literally or metaphorically analyzed. This greeting expression can be decoded in terms of days (three days) or longevity (long time). This greeting is used if both parties have seen each other for a long time.

#### 9. *ẹ kú idide* ‘thanks for coming

Pragmatically, someone cannot tell which meaning should be tagged with this type of greeting unless someone understands the context by which the greeting is transmitted. The meaning that the hearer will attach depends on the context. If someone has taken his time to visit

someone on a purpose or honour an invite, it will be meant an appreciation for visiting someone. If ordinarily, someone stood up from his/her seat, the pragmatic sign can mean to abuse someone for unnecessary standing up or praise him/her for standing up.

10. **ẹ kú ewu ọkọ/ẹ kú ewu ojú ọnà** ‘thank God for journey mercies’.

This greeting is offered to a person who has just arrived from a journey successfully. It shows caring and concern for the addressee. Yoruba interact with other cultures and tend to tolerate and accommodate them therefore they make use of this greeting to welcome people from a journey. 'Ewu' means danger in Yoruba, it is believed that a lot of danger is attached to the journey which is why they always greet and embrace people returning from a journey in a very special and esteemed way. The above greeting can be perceived that an initiator is caring and hospitable.

11. **ẹ kú ìrìn**

This greeting captures a situation of a trip or walking. This is a circumstancing greeting. The condition for this greeting is that a person must have travelled or walked for a period of time. The initiator of the greeting conversation can use this greeting positively or negatively, depending on his or her feelings towards the addressee in the discourse. If negative, it might be subjected to question and remain ambiguous. If positive, the conversation might not have stopped therefore, the following day the initiator might still say *ẹkú ìrìnàná* or *ẹkú ìrìnọjó*. The pragmatic message is direct to the circumstance while the speaker's meaning is relative to the context.

12. **mo bá yín ní ire** ‘I have met you well.’

This greeting is directed to someone eating '*mobáyínní ire*' (I have met you well). It is a polite greeting expressed to show pleasantry to someone while eating. The person eating might initiate the greeting by saying '*ẹ bá mi níre*' (you meet me well). '*ẹ bá mi níre*' is used for inviting the addressee to join him/her in eating. Most times it is expected of the addressee to say '*á gbaibi ire*' (it will go well). Failure to say '*á gbaibi ire*' regards the addressee as *olójúkòkòrò*.

### 13. **a kú rògbòdiyàn**

**A kú rògbòdiyàn** is situational rather than time-greeting. It is used when there is a problem going on in one's immediate environment or at a particular place. The pragmatic use might go in a different direction depending solely on what the problem looks like.

Example:

*a kú rògbòdiyàntí ó n sẹ̀lẹ̀ ní idílẹ̀ wayí o* 'problem going on in the family.'

*a kú rògbòdiyàntí ó n selẹ̀ níorílèdè yí'* 'problem going on in the country'

*a kú rògbòdiyànyí* 'indefinite'

### 14. **mo kí òta, mo kí òpè** 'I salute the winner and the novice'

This greeting is exchanged when a group of people is playing the traditional Yorùbá games such as ayò òlópón, draft or any game. This greeting is logical, in this context, the word *òta* means the winner while *òpè* is the novice. When the person lunches this greeting, this initiates him to the game automatically. This means he can now be involved in the next game. It also shows politeness towards the people he met in the scene of the game.

### 15. **ẹ̀ẹ́ bí akọ; ẹ̀ẹ́ bí abo/ ẹ̀yìn iyáwó kòní mọ ẹ̀ní o-** 'you will give birth to male and female'

This greeting is pragmatically directed to newly wedded couples '**ẹ̀ẹ́ bí akọ ẹ̀ẹ́ bí abo**' (you will give birth to male and female) or '**ẹ̀yìn iyáwó kòní mọ ẹ̀ní o**' (literally-may the back of the wife not get used to the mat implying may the wife get pregnant on time, indicative of the cultural premium placed on a wife promptly getting pregnant after a marriage). The metaphorical meaning of the above greeting is simply that the wife will give birth in due time. The transformational meaning is decoded by the receiver.

### 16. **ẹ kú ìjokòó; ẹ káàbò o/ẹ kú ináwó o; ẹ kú idìde o; ẹ sẹ o**

This can be translated thus: you are well sitted/ you've been sitting for a while, and we appreciate you; you are welcome; you've spent a lot of time and we appreciate you; Thanks for coming; Thank you/ thanks a lot. *Ìjókòó*, at intervals, serves as a summary of what has been done or said so far, especially where it appears to be a lot of non - Yoruba participants or guests in the

audience; this can be ascertained from the dressing or looks of the guests. The transformational meaning of this greeting expression can be perceived as being appreciative.

Below greeting, exchanges can infiltrate a sense of appreciation by the celebrant,

17. <i>Greeting</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
<i>Celebrant: ẹ ẹ́ sa</i>	‘thanks sir
<i>ẹ kú idìde</i>	thanks for coming (thanks for standing up)
<i>ẹ kú ànàwó sí</i>	thank you for your contribution
<i>ẹ kú àdúró tì wa</i>	thanks for staying with us
<i>Oluwa yoo ma duroti yin o</i>	God will be with you

*The receivers reply thus:*

*àmínooo, kò tọ́pé / àídúpéaraẹni.*                      ‘amen, don’t mention’

In furtherance, our informants provided that the significance of this greeting expression is to exhibit culture and retain harmony with everyone in the society. It was said that if two people who are in the same social group meet on a certain occasion and did not greet each other, this shows a clash or disharmony between them. According to our informant, he said this can cause a state of insurgence or problem for both the society and the families.

It was observed during the Oketase, a man stood up to give his recognition to the necessary people. The man said:

18. *Utterer:            à ẹ̀yí sàmódún o!*  
*Audience:            à ẹ̀ oo!*  
*Utterer:                ẹ kú ọdún o!*  
*Audience:            àláfia!*

*Utterer:            I greet àràbà àgbáyé and all elders gathered at Ile Ifẹ for the world Ifá festival. greetings on my own and on behalf of iyàwó mi olorì Adétọ́lá Ọdúnfúnládé. greetings from my 94years old maternal grandmother to àgbáyé .*

The sociolinguistic observation is code-mixing. However, the use of this greeting lies in the context of this occasion. The pragmatic meaning is embedded in this occasion. This greeting is showing a great wish for the audience. After this festival, I could hear some greeting exchanges:

19. 'ẹ̀ n̄ lé mà  
 a kú odún òní  
 àsẹ̀yisàmódún  
 Ifá á dá waśioo  
 A o ní kú dà m̀ódún oo  
 pí rí lologo n̄ jí, a o ní sàisàn.'

'ẹ̀ n̄ lé mà  
 a kú ọdún.'

Let us compare and contrast the above greeting expression with this:

20. 'ẹ̀ lé mà/ ẹ̀ n̄ lé sà (well done ma/sir  
 a kú ayeyẹ̀ òní happy celebration  
 èrè pupọ̀ la ó rí ní bẹ̀ o' may we gain a lot from the celebration)

The significant use of the greeting expression in (21) might not be directly determined because such expression can be exchanged in many ceremonies such as graduation, wedding and other social ceremonies among the Yoruba people. The greeting in (20) is exchanged during Ifá festival since the utterer said *Ifá a dáwasí o*. The second could have been easily denoted if such expression comprises of *ẹ̀yìnìyàwó kònimẹ̀ni' o*.

Let's consider the greeting expression which shows sympathy towards a loss of life.

- | <b>21. Greeting</b>                                                | <b>Response</b>               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>ẹ̀ pẹ̀lé ma (good day ma)</i>                                   | <i>ẹ̀ ẹ̀é ma (thanks ma)</i>  |
| <i>ẹ̀ kú ọrọ̀ èyàn( sorry for loss)</i>                            | <i>ẹ̀ ẹ̀éunmà (thanks ma)</i> |
| <i>Ọjọ̀ a jìnà síra wọ̀n (may you not die prematurely)</i>         | <i>àmín (amen)</i>            |
| <i>Olúwa ò níṣe é lákùfáà o (may this not cause further death)</i> | <i>àmín (amen)</i>            |
| <i>ẹ̀ ẹ̀é mà/sir (thanks ma/sir)</i>                               |                               |
| <i>a ò nífirú ẹ̀ gbàá o/ a ò ní firú ẹ̀ san án fúnra wa</i>        |                               |
| <i>(may we not repay each other with death)</i>                    | <i>àmín ooo (amen)</i>        |

This expression is expressed when a person lost someone. This is used to denote concern and sympathy for the person. The pragmatic use of this expression is only allowed when someone dies. Literally, the expression *ẹ̀ kúọrọ̀ èyàn* is a metaphoric expression. In Yoruba language, *ọrọ̀* simply means 'wealth.' *Ọrọ̀* in this context means 'endurance' of the loss.

Pragmatically, our informant provides explicit information on the mental state of both speaker and receiver of the greetings. Although there is a cultural method of exchanging greetings yet, the mental state of both parties contributes to the pragmatic coding and decoding of greeting occasions. Below example analyzes different meanings.

**22. Greeting exchange:**

- |              |                                             |                                                 |
|--------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Òjó:</i>  | <i>ẹ kú ilé nílẹ̀ yi o</i>                  | <i>(I greet the people of this house)</i>       |
| <i>Mama:</i> | <i>Oooooo, iwọ̀ tanì yẹ̀n oo?</i>           | <i>(we greet you, who are you)</i>              |
| <i>Òjó:</i>  | <i>èmiÒjó ni</i>                            | <i>(it is me Ojo)</i>                           |
| <i>Màmá:</i> | <i>Òjó kẹ̀? Òjó, iwọ̀ ni, ẹ́ dáadáa ni?</i> | <i>(ojo? Ojo you are the one? How are you?)</i> |
| <i>Òjó:</i>  | <i>bẹ̀yẹ̀nì ma, dáadáa ni mà</i>            | <i>(yes ma, fine ma.)</i>                       |

In the above greeting exchange, ‘*iwọ̀ tanì yẹ̀n?*’ denotes the fact that a person in the room does not know who is really at the door, therefore demanding an introduction from the visitor. Since what the speaker means can only be justified by his/her state of mind and circumstance, which hold the utterance, it is very hard to know the actual meaning of greetings in Yoruba except for the cultural meaning among the people.

**23. ẹ kú ohùn bàbá (well done for your words of wisdom)**

This is an honorific. It is used to commend an effort of an elderly person when a person has been talking for a while.

**24. ẹ kú iṣẹ́ ‘well-done’**

This is used to praise or commend the effort of a person when he/she has been working for a while. This goes in line with a proverb that *kú iṣẹ́ nimórí yá*. When a person is commended for work or during work, such a person is happy. They believe that when a person is greeted in such a manner, he/she gains more strength and willingness to do more.

**25. kú làákàyè ‘I salute your intelligence.’**

‘*Làákàyè*’ is intelligence therefore this greeting expression is appraisal in nature. It is used to complement the intelligence of someone whether in action or speech. It is used when someone has done or spoken well. The pragmatic meaning is used to salute the intellect of someone. If someone shows a sense of direction when someone is making a speech or accurately provides an answer to some complicated questions then this greeting comes in.

**26. ẹ pẹ̀lẹ̀ bàbá, ẹ kú àgbà ‘I commend you for your age.’**

This is expressed towards an old man or woman who doesn't have more strength to walk. Our informant explained that it depicts honours in Yoruba land and the elderly people are so happy anytime they are greeted in this manner. This same expression connotes a way of expressing concern when a person has just sneezed.

27. **ẹ kú òsì; ẹ kú ìranù** 'Well done for your nonsensical act.'

The tone of the expression is somehow suspicious and conspicuous. The addressee is reluctant to reply to this greeting. This type of greeting is used to disgust a gossip act or rebuke an unacceptable attitude/manner in society.

28. **ẹ kú ègàn; ẹ kú òfófó** 'Well done for your hypocrisy.'

The literal meaning of these greeting expressions is known to the speaker and the purpose is to rebuke and correct any uncultured acts. Pragmatically, these types of greetings cannot be exchanged if someone has not suspected any foul play. Others will be listed thus

- ẹ kú àyọnusọ-well done for meddling act*
- ẹ kú tiyín- well done for your own unfortunate*
- ẹ kú àimò èyí tókàn- well done for not what is next*
- ẹ kú wàhàlà etc. - well done for the problem*

In some of these circumstances, greetings are used in media to show positive politeness to the target audience. Examples of such greetings include:

29. **ẹ kú ilé and ẹ káàbò** (greeting to the people in the house).

**ẹ kú ilé and ẹ káàbò** is the most controversial greeting expression in my observation among the Yorùbá people. This greeting is the most exchanged type of greeting by this ethnic group. The main context acceptable for this type of greeting is when someone meets people at home, at this point he/she is expected to initiate the greeting by saying e kú lé. The person at home will immediately respond with *ẹ kú àbò* (welcome). It is controversial because this is the rule laid down in justification with this proverb *ẹnití ò kínikúulé, yó pàdánù káàbò* (someone who does not salute people at home lost welcome). In furtherance to this, if an elder comes in and he or she meets the younger ones at home, the younger ones are expected to spark the greeting. Hence, we must say the above proverb is questionable.

However, the circumstance in which two people meet on the street and greet each other *ẹ kú ilé and ẹ káàbò* is controversial to time greeting. Most of the time I observe someone could go



otherwise with a preferable time greeting. This is because both parties are coming from different directions therefore, who to accept the *ẹ kúuléandẹ káàbò* is sometimes problematic for both parties.

Nevertheless, the fact is that among the Yorùbá people, some people still negotiate the type of greeting to be exchanged. Observation measures the length of systematic combination of greetings. If two people meet on the street they can exchange greetings thus:

<i>Greeting</i>	<i>Response</i>
<i>ẹ káàbò mà (welcome ma )</i>	<i>ẹ kásàn án</i>
<i>ẹ kúròlẹ sà (good evening sir)</i>	<i>ẹ káàbò ma/sir</i>

## 6. Discussion of the Findings

Yorùbá greetings are normally begun by the interlocutor of lower status and responded to by the interlocutor of higher rank, but in some cases (especially in an intimate atmosphere); the interlocutors do not follow this rule. In other words, it is quite natural for the interlocutor(s) to utter their shares simultaneously or if with a latency, to use the same notion (e.g., A: *ẹ káàárọ mà*. B: *ẹ káàárọ mà*). The reason for this apparent license is that the second greeting is not a reply to the first. Both are reactive responses to the sudden availability of the participants to each other, and the point of performing these little rituals is not to solicit a reply or to reply to a solicitation, but to act an emotion that attests to the pleasure produced by contact.

The key to understanding the Yoruba greetings on a pragmatic level lies in an understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal behaviour. It is through the intricacies of face-to-face interaction that power is negotiated, alliances are made, action is made, and choices of strategy are made. Greeting exchanges involving the use of names or address terms vary enormously in such term as who speaks first, what a suitable reply is, and even what variety of language may be employed. It can be safely argued that, if there are important differences in the way greetings work within and between ethnic groups who speak different varieties of the same language, we must expect to find greater differences across speech communities where various languages are spoken. Such a situation is found in Yoruba dialectical greetings. In the cultural adjacent situation, the greetings can be initiated by either of the parties and accepted by the first

parties or the second parties if both of them are in a mutual situation. These types of greetings might not regard age or superiority since the two parties are in a mutual form.

On the other hand, the cultural non-adjacent situation is a bit different from that of the adjacent situation. The greetings can be initiated by either party but not accepted by one party, if the greeting is not well arranged the older parties might not accept the greeting.

## 7. Conclusion

This study researches the pragmatics analysis of the time and circumstances greetings of the Yoruba. The study was able to discuss the greetings of the day alongside different circumstances greetings which were categorized into praising greetings, bullying greetings, appreciation greetings and occasion greetings. It is of no hesitation, that greeting expression in Yoruba language thoroughly rested on the context and circumstance. Though there are general rules and conventions, sometimes the mental ability of someone is still required to determine some greeting messages among this tribe. Lastly, Grice's (1975) Cooperative principles truly revealed the hidden parts of Yoruba greeting expressions.

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