

## **A SOCIOLINGUISTICS IMPACT OF NGAMAMBO GREETING CULTURE AND IDENTITY**

**Sirih Nagang Nancy Nyindem**

Department of Linguistics & African Languages,  
The University of Bamenda  
[nancybeb@gmail.com](mailto:nancybeb@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

Despite the increasing rate of modernity nowadays, language has always been and is still used as an ingenious device for transmitting ideologies from one generation to the other. This study documents and examines the sociolinguistic importance of greetings as a fundamental interactional ritual in Ngamambo, a Grassfields Bantu language spoken by the Mbu people in the Mezam Division of the North West Region of Cameroon (Eberhard et al., 2019). Greetings are indices of appropriate socialisation that portray the relationship between the interactants and serve as a binding fabric that holds the community together. Through an ethnographic approach, qualitative and quantitative data were obtained from forty (40) language consultants (20 adults and 20 youths) employing interview and participant observation. Thirty greeting forms were identified, recorded, and transcribed using Elan. These forms were presented and analysed within the speech act theory (Austin, 1975) and the linguistic anthropology approach, revealing their semantic implications and the circumstances surrounding the salutation. The study established that the greeting culture in Ngamambo, which expresses the relationship between the speakers and the community's living and dead members, is declining due to modernity, Christianity, and the influence of the dominant language, English, and the specific forms reflect the Identity of the tribe and clan. The study reveals that the Ngamambo speakers use various verbal and nonverbal greeting forms determined by social factors such as age, religion, social status, and location. It documents the greeting forms in the language, which are gradually becoming endangered.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistics, impact, greetings, Ngamambo, culture, and Identity

### **1. Introduction**

Ngamambo is a Western Grassfields Bantu language of the Momo group, spoken by the Mbu people in the Santa sub-division, Mezam Division of

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the North West Region of Cameroon. Ngamambo is a compound word derived from the words *Ngam*, which means "talk or language", and *mbo*, which means "of Mbu". Ngamambo, therefore, represents the language of the Mbu people. According to Dieu and Renaud (1983), Ngamambo is classified in ALCAM (Atlas Linguistique du Cameroon) and assigned the code 868 spoken in Mbu, Mungyen, Bafuchu, Banja, Nga, Ngembo, Meforbe, and Mbei. Other dialects spoken within the momo group are Moghamo, Metta, Menemo, and Ngiembu.

Greetings are often one of the first verbal acts that children or learners of a language learn. Language is one of the main vessels people use to communicate their values and beliefs and portray cultural Identity. Thus, language and culture are conceived as two inseparable phenomena. Mastering a language should not be restricted to knowledge about the grammatical rules in the language. Still, it should incorporate the basic discourse rules or conversational routines involved in language use. The concept of language has been defined varyingly by different scholars—Nwoye (1996) refers to it as an expressive and interpretive system of vocal symbols to relate to others.

According to Duranti (1997, p.63), Greetings are essential to the communicative competence necessary for being part of any speech community. It constitutes an integral part of language use and cultural values and is often observed to be the first verbal routine children learn. The concept of communicative competence is the ability of a native speaker to speak and understand their language and to use it appropriately. It “subsumes the social determinants of linguistic behaviour, including such environmental matters as the relationship between the speakers and hearers, and the pressures which stem from the time and place of speaking” (Crystal, 2003, p.88). Greetings constitute a set of linguistic(verbal) and non-linguistic(non-verbal) expressions humans use in social interactions and encounters.

Also, Greeting is considered a universal feature of human interaction and can be defined as “the set of linguistics and non-linguistics devices used for initial management of encounters” (Ibrahim et al., 1976, p.12). The linguistics devices here refer to verbal exchanges between the interlocutors and non-linguistics forms, such as hand waving, eye movement, gestures, and embraces used as a greeting (Harvey 1982, cited in Ekanjume, 2013, p.26). Furthermore, Akindede (2007) sees greetings as the exchange of expressions, pleasantries, or good wishes between two people or a group of people interacting to establish an interpersonal relationship.

According to Nwoye (1993, p.1), greetings are significant indices of appropriate socialisation, the measure and the type of relationship between the interactants, and the means of ensuring the sustenance of the binding fabric that holds the community together. Thus, there is a need to study the greeting patterns of any speech community, such as the Mbu speech. As a result of the cross-linguistic variation in what constitutes a Greeting, express that a greeting expression in one culture may not be regarded as one in another. In other words, greetings gain meaning from the culture they are derived from, and their precise content is culture-bound.

Considering the controversy on the concept of greetings as reflected in the increased interest by many researchers, this study enhances the opinion of Duranti (1997, p.89), who argues against the claim that greetings are meaningless. Also, he asserts that, amongst other things, greetings can be used to get information about a person's beliefs, Identity, and location. For instance, in Ngamambo, the greeting /*mbə sá'à yé'*/ meaning “how are you” can be understood as a genuine interest in one's welfare/wellbeing and requires a polite response revealing one's State/condition of health.

There are nine vowel and forty-nine consonant sounds (prenasalised and labialised inclusive) attested in Ngamambo. The vowels comprise six unrounded / i, e, i, ε, ə, a / and three rounded vowels / u, o, ɔ/. The vowels /i/ and /a/ are nominal prefix markers for nouns in classes 3(b) and 7, respectively. The language has a basic morpheme structure of CV(C): a consonant, a vowel, and an optional consonant. Tones also play a distinctive role in the Ngamambo language. The H, L, M, HL, and LH tones are attested in this language, and the mid-tone is not marked. The H and L tones are commonly marked, and the contour tones are derived from tonological processes (usually, a floating tone from a deleted segment that spreads or docks to the preceding or following sound). These tones are expressed on monosyllabic, disyllabic, and polysyllabic words, and they equally bring about a difference in the meaning of words in the language. In addition to the familiar low-tone prefixes, Ngamambo has high and mid-tone prefixes, and prefixal tone is predictable in the language wherein the CV prefixes have H tones, the V prefixes have M tones, and the Nasal prefixes have L tones.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

Since language is considered one of the main instruments by which beliefs, values, systems, and cultural practices are communicated and greetings constitute an integral part of language use and cultural values, the sociolinguistic importance of greetings becomes a phenomenon to examine and analyse. It is realised that the lack of appropriate greeting forms in Ngamambo could disrespect cultural norms and, eventually, the endangered aspect of this particular practice among the Mbu people.

## **3. Aim of the study**

The primary aim of this study is to identify and explain the various greeting forms in Ngamambo and to equally show how they may differ in terms of age, gender, and status when used in casual and social settings. In Ngamambo, greetings are considered a communal/unifying act and a symbol of peaceful social co-existence, which enhances good

Communication among the community members. Thus, greetings are expected in every context or situation when someone goes everywhere or contacts anyone they know.

#### **4. State of the art of research**

##### **-on Greetings**

Research on greetings has been expressed from varying areas of interest. Krivonos and Knapp (1975) studied greetings to discover the most frequent verbal and nonverbal behaviours associated with them and investigated whether these behaviours vary according to the relationship between interlocutors. For instance, what kind of message is conveyed when nonverbal greetings are used with parents or church leaders? Their study revealed that speakers would smile with acquaintances not to appear friendly but manipulatively to achieve a desired goal, which may be unknown to the listener.

Also, Laver (1981) examined the linguistic patterns of conversation, confirming that greetings as conversational routines are part of the linguistic repertoire of politeness. Considering greetings as tools of polite behaviour, he based his research on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to explain the function and importance of greetings. His research distinguishes between a negative face (the want that one's action be unimpeded by others) and a cheerful face (the want that one's wants be desirable to at least some others).

Almegren (2017) examined the speech Acts of Greeting for native Arabic speakers of the Saudi Region and English speakers of Merican from a comparative perspective, focusing on variables such as status, setting, social distance, and situation formality. The term identity has embraced varying views from different perspectives; this study adopts the view that Identity is used to refer to membership in a community in which people define who they are by the familiar and the unfamiliar, secondly as a learning trajectory in which they define themselves by past experiences

and envision futures, and lastly as a nexus of multi membership in which people reconcile their various forms of membership into one coherent sense of self (Haneda, 2005).

Through an ethnographical view, research by Youssouf et al. (1979) focused on the description of Greeting in one society, assuming that greetings are exchanges governed everywhere by systemic rules and extra-systemic universals. His research on greetings in the desert demonstrated that news and companionships are highly valued in the wilderness, and strangers may be or become enemies given that the sensitivity of cues of Identity are of importance or survival. As such, adult males must learn complex norms for interpreting verbal and other behaviours in implementing greetings and exchanging information.

Greetings have been viewed and analysed from the varying functions they uphold within a given context and social situation; according to Firth (1972:2), a greeting is described as the recognition of an encounter with another person socially appropriate, and it is of significant importance to establish a social relationship recognising both parties as relevant social entities. Similarly, Goffman (1971) looks at greetings in the social interaction of parting to mark and validate the opening and closing of interpersonal access. They highlight that greetings' importance, form, and functions are primarily expressed in the verbal interaction of most societies in several social groups using various languages. Goffman, in addition to demonstrating a wide range of functions performed by greetings, in which greetings and farewells confirm and symbolise the opening and closing of interpersonal access, further hints at other functions accomplished by greetings, such as politeness, threat, denial, and Identity. The current study draws on data on greetings in Ngamambo, considering some of the functions expressed in greetings identified by Goffman.

Also, Goody (1972) and Irvine (1974) demonstrated the manipulative use of greetings to exert a coercive effect in circumstances where claims cannot be expressed based on kinship. Goody conferred begging and Greeting within the Gonja community as closely linked social performances, taking into account the functions they perform. On the other hand, Irvine pays excellent attention to how role greeting performs in Wolof, given that it occurs in every interaction in the community expressing social relationships.

Moreover, Duranti (2008) researched the universal and culturally specific properties of Greeting, proposing six criteria for identifying greetings across languages and speech communities. His research contradicted the claims put forth by Searle (1969 and Youssouf et al. (1976), considering greetings as verbal formulas with virtually no propositional content or zero referential value, respectively. Duranti demonstrated that not all greetings are predictable and lack propositional content.

Research on Greetings has been elaborated as Sunkyoung et al. (2017) took an interest in the verbal and nonverbal Greetings in the social interaction between humans and robots. He investigated the social interaction process of initiation, continuation, and termination as vital stages in sharing greetings. The study reveals that a greeting process continues or ends depending on the level of interest expressed by its user. For example, a conversation will begin with a minimum of two persons expressing interest, while a conversation will end with at least two persons expressing boredom, and for the conversation to continue, more or one person has to share an interest. This current research converges with Sunkyoung's as it focuses on both verbal and non-verbal forms of greetings in Ngamambo, considering the various social interaction stages, but differs as its interest is on the social interaction of humans and not robots.

**- On Ngamambo**

Ngamambo, as a semi-Bantu Grassfields language, has embraced little research, especially in the description domain. In theoretical linguistics, Asongwed and Hyman (1976) presented a classification of the Noun system of the language. They identified that the language manifests a system of eleven noun classes, with seven singular-plural gender pairs and one single-class gender. In addition, further research by Achir-Taboh (2014) on the Ngamambo Noun class system with a focus on Concord and prefixhood established that this same language makes use of overt prefixes, whereas they do not in reality. Also, he reported that apart from the locative classes and the infinitive noun class marker, Ngamambo uses thirteen noun classes (with five prefixes covertly marked and eight overtly marked), twelve singular-plural gender pairs, and eight single-class genders. His work further revealed that some nouns do not take overt prefixes, and apart from their semantic contents, they can equally be classified together with others considering a form of agreement they trigger with other categories in a given construction. These findings reveal that the Noun class system of Ngamambo manifests a complex system. With the evolution of language embracing innovations and modernity employing language expansion mechanisms, a concise study needs to be engaged to incorporate new items in the noun structure of the language.

Other works of interest on Ngamambo, such as Nyindem (2007), focused on the syntactic operation of focus construction in the language. She compared two distinct constructions (Focus constructions and Relative clauses), proposing a unique account of their morphosyntactic and semantic structures with emphasis on the syntactic process of packaging information in an utterance through manipulating categories within a sentence to achieve the communicative purpose for which it was intended. Her study revealed that Ngamambo is a language with an SVO structure and, in focusing on both constructions, single out a particular constituent from a group for purposes of emphasis. Thus, the focused



constituent and the relativised NP are displaced from their original positions in both constructions. Instead of using phonetic cues (e.g., high tone, intonation contours, etc.) as in some languages, the Ngamambo speakers obligatorily move the relevant constituent from its base position to a slot reserved for emphasis and contrastive focus. Hence, a Minimalist analysis of both constructions accounts for the trigger of movement, the locus of the trigger, and the landing site of the moved constituent. A +FOC feature is located in the head of FocP. It is proposed to account for the preposing of the focused constituent and the relativised NP in the language.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, a rapid sociolinguistic appraisal survey was conducted on the Ngamambo speech community in three villages in the Santa-Sub Division and Mezam Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. The three villages surveyed and their languages were Meforbe (Ngamambo), Mbei (Ngamambei), and Mbu-Baforchu (Ngamambu), with speakers located at the Meforbe, Mbei, Mbu-Baforchu, Baba II villages and some predominantly located in Ngembu quarter of Mbengwi and the Ngemuwah Banja quarter of Batibo (accounted by the historical migration of the Ngamambo speakers from Widikum). This survey had as an intention to assess the following: the incomprehension and attitudes between the speech forms classified under Ngamambo (868), the vitality of the speech forms, looking at the use of other languages and in language development, and determining the feasibility of developing the Ngamambo language by assessing vitality, viability, native speakers' attitudes towards development and other sociolinguistic factors. It revealed that the Ngamambo speakers in Baforchu and Meforbe manifest similar cognates as they both retained the standard prefix (é), whereas those in the Mbei village dropped it. Also, the speakers living in Mbengwi and Batibo speak differently from residents in Mbei, Meforbe, Baforchu, and Baba II, who speak the same. These speakers had different languages in their repertoire (English & Camerron Pidgin English, etc.)

used in different communicative domains such as at home, local market, local council meetings, church, hospital, and with friends. The attitudes of the native speakers of Ngamambo revealed the desire to speak, read, and see the language written and embrace more steps to standardising this language. The current study fits in appropriately to provide more information, documenting and describing how the language is spoken, ensuring its vitality and viability.

### **5. Theoretical framework and Methodology**

The Ethnographic and the Speech Act Approaches were adopted for data collection and analysis (Holmes, 2008). The Speech Act Approach is used given that greeting rituals are part of speech acts, i.e., language functions performed by our words. Through an eclectic range of data collection techniques, we collected 30 greeting forms by recording real conversation settings. Interviews and participatory observation were also employed for data elicitation. The research population for this study is native speakers of Ngamambo, and the variables of age, gender, educational background, and social status were considered. Forty language consultants were interviewed within the age range of 10 – 60. From the two wide age groups of 20 adults and 20 who served as language consultants, each was interviewed, and the different greeting forms were elicited, transcribed using ELAN, and translated into English with the assistance of a language consultant. Data was obtained through interviews and participant observation of native speakers of Ngamambo and analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The statistics on the frequency of usage of the greeting forms are presented in tables and recorded in percentages. Through an ethnographic approach, the study is descriptive and focuses on the culturally specific aspects of greeting behaviours that reveal status and manipulation in Ngamambo.

According to Grice's (1975) communication principle, the conversation should conform to the four maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. This study will examine how effective Communication occurs

when respecting or violating the maxims. Givon (2009) relates that when we speak (or listen), we focus on words rather than body language. However, our judgement or responses include verbal and non-verbal cues such as smiles, gestures, proxemics, eye contact, and touching. They are essential to regulating interactions and for showing interest, politeness, and approval or disapproval. The linguistics Anthropological approach explores the complexion of human language in the context of these cultures that developed them with an interest in the social and cultural values grounded in linguistic practices. This study documents the greeting culture of the Mbu people and how it portrays their Identity.

## **6. Data presentation and discussion**

Greetings play an essential role in everyday conversational routines in the Mbu village. Ngamambo speakers use various communication cues in their daily interactions, whether verbal or nonverbal. When beginning or ending, they use direct words or behaviours, such as facial expressions, gestures, and distance adjustments. This section is divided into two; section one will contain verbal forms of Greeting, while section two discusses the non-verbal forms of greetings.

### **6.1. Verbal Forms of Greetings and their significance in Ngamambo**

This section examines and discusses verbal greeting forms in Ngamambo, considering the following: time of the day, commendation, status, commiseration, hospitality, and any other form of Greeting expressing their choice and domain of usage about factors such as age, religion, and social status.

#### **6.1. 1 Times of the Day Greeting**

Greeting forms reflecting the time of the day are used amongst all the age groups of speakers in Mbu. They are expressions used in morning, afternoon, evening, and night greetings. Below are illustrations of the different greeting forms used during the different periods of the day

### A. Morning

The expressions present below are greeting forms used in the morning.

#### Example 1

<b>1a</b>	<i>tú</i>	<i>Fə</i>	<i>tsék</i>	<b>b</b>	<i>à</i>	<i>fə</i>	<i>nəh?</i>	<b>c</b>	<i>mbə</i>	<i>sá'à</i>	<i>yé'é?</i>
	day	Prst	break	You(sg)	Prst.Perf	wake-up		You(pl)	how	WH-	
	day	Is	break	you	have	wake-up?		You	are	how	
	"It is dawn."			"Have you woken up?"				"How are you fairing?"			

The three structures presented above are verbal greeting forms used in the Mbu community in the morning. Example 1(a) is expressed in a declarative form, revealing the state of the day or a fact, while (b) and (c) are expressed in interrogative forms, inferring about one's wellbeing. 100% of native speakers of both sexes and all age ranges use the verbal greeting form of 1b. The old and young can use all these forms of Greeting in the morning to greet each other but in different domains and settings. However, it is worth mentioning that the youths rarely use the greeting form 1c in greeting elders except in situations such as ill-health; otherwise, when used, it is considered a sign of disrespect manifested by the younger person, and as a result, the child's greetings will not be accepted.

**Table 1: Greeting forms used in the morning according to age.**

Greetings forms (morning)	Youths		Adults	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1a- <i>tú fə tsék</i> (it is dawn)	5	25%	20	100%
1b <i>à fə nəh?</i> (have you woken up?)	20	100%	20	100%
1c <i>Mbə sá'à yé'é?</i> (how are you fairng?)	10	50%	20	100%

From the statistics presented above in Table 1 on the usage frequency of the greeting forms of 1(a, b, and c), the percentages vary, taking into consideration the age variable. The responses reveal that 100% of the adults use the greeting expression 1(c), while 50% of youths use it to express concern for the adult's welfare. Greeting in 1(a) is used primarily among the elderly to acknowledge the blessing of a new bonus day in their lives, which reflects the 100% score. Meanwhile, 25% of youths also rarely use this form of Greeting when communicating within their age group. The greeting form in 1(b) is generally used within the Mbu community, showing concern for one another's wellbeing. The responses to the different greeting forms used in the mornings vary; for instance, the reaction for 1(a) would be the repetition of the same expression, for 1(b) would either be *èèh* “yes”, *miyàkà* “thank you” or *ànòh búyà* “you are awake” (wishing the same) and for (c) it would either be *mbòti* “fine”, or *miyàkà* “thank you”. These greeting forms and their responses go along equally with the non-verbal cues such as smiles, eye contact, and touching, such as shaking hands.

### **B. Afternoon/ Evening**

The expressions presented below are greeting forms used in the afternoon

<b>2a.</b>	<i>À</i>	<i>Fə</i>	<i>zɛʔ-é?</i>	<b>2b.</b>	<i>mé</i>	<i>wé</i>	<i>tsáʔtɛ</i>
	You(sg)	Prst. Perf	to spend the day.		I	aux	greet-prog.
	“Have you rested?”				“I am greeting.”		

The greeting forms in 2a and (b) above are expressions used by the old and the young in greeting each other or one another in the afternoon and the evening in the Mbu community. They are mainly used to inquire about a person's situation within the day or how they are fairing. These greetings can only be verbal and do not necessarily present verbal cues in their rendition. The speaker's intention may be to express a concern and does it as an act of formality in just checking on the welfare of the individual he/she is greeting.

### C. Night

There are also greeting forms that can be used at night.

<b>3a.</b> <i>Tú fɛ̃ fɪn</i>	<b>3b</b> <i>mbé wé ngú?</i>
day Prst black	You (pl) aux there (inside)
Day is finish	Are you There
	people
“It is dark or goodnight.”	“Are you people inside ?”

The expressions presented in 3(a & b) above are greeting forms used at night. They are used by both the old and the young in the community. The greeting form 3(a) can only be used when greeting at night, while 3(b) expressed in an interrogative form is used within the day (afternoon) and at night. However, it is acceptable in the afternoon when the persons involved have met and greeted themselves in the morning. It is used to assert the presence of someone previously encountered and ensure they are fairing well. Also, younger persons cannot use it to greet older adults, but it can be used vice versa, mostly as a response to greetings from younger persons. Out of the 40 consultants interviewed, all 20 adults and only a total of 5 youths attest they use the greeting forms of 3(a, b), giving a percentage score of 100% and 25%, respectively. In contrast, seven youths used form 3(b) when relating with their intimate peers, scoring 35%. The greeting form in 3(b) asserts that it is night, and everybody must have returned home to rest.

**Table 2: Greeting forms used at night**

Greetings forms (Night)	Youths		Adults	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
3(a) / <i>tú fɛ̃ fɪn</i> / (It is dark or goodnight) & b) / <i>mbé wé ngú?</i> / (Are you people inside?)	5	25	20	100
3(b) / <i>mbé wé ngú?</i> / (Are you people inside?)	7	35	20	100

The statistics in Table 2 above reveal that the communicative cues are used by both the male and female genders in the community under study during their conversations in the evening, but the percentages of usage vary depending on the age groups involved in the communication encounters.

#### **D. Parting ways**

Parting ways is also an event that manifests some verbal and non-verbal modes of communicating feelings and intentions between the speaker and hearer.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>4a.</b>    <i>ʏé</i>        <i>tɪyá</i><br/>                   3pl    Fut. go<br/>                   "We will be going."</p>                               | <p><b>4b.</b>    <i>ʏé</i>        <i>fǎ-sú</i><br/>                   3pl    See-tomorrow<br/>                   "Will see you tomorrow."</p> |
| <p><b>4c.</b>    <i>mé</i>        <i>wé</i>        <i>nɔ́d̥ɪ</i><br/>                   I           aux        road<br/>                   "I am on my way."</p> |   |

The greeting forms presented in 4(a) and (b) above are mainly used when parting ways. The expression in 4(b) is primarily used when parting ways, especially at night, to meet again the following day. It expresses “certainty” for the speakers to see each other again the next day. Example 4(a, b & c) are used by every age group within the community and also serve as an expression symbolising politeness from the speaker. All the 40 language consultants used these greeting forms, accompanied by a non-verbal gesture of being on your feet and ready to take your leave. From observation, the greeting form of 4c can also be used figuratively within a conversation by speakers of both age groups (youths and adults) to express the speaker's willingness to embark on a journey or attend an event. At this point, the expression is not accompanied by a non-verbal gesture.

#### **6.1.2. Commendation**

These are expressions used to acknowledge and appreciate a service rendered to someone or the activities of someone

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- 5a.** *abórabó'd* "sorry or ashia"  
Softly, gently
- 5b.** *báti* "Sorry, be careful, courage."
- 5c.** *miyàkà, miyà* "thank you, thanks."

The greeting forms presented in example 5 above are used in Ngamambo to "appreciate", "acknowledge", "exalt", "encourage", and "motivate" someone who has accomplished an exercise or task successfully either at home or in society. Also, it is used after completing any task of goodwill, success or kindness. Greeting forms 5(a & b) are also used in consolation when someone has experienced a misfortune, for instance, grief, lost something or fallen and hurt themselves. These greeting forms are used by both the young and old to greet and show concern without restrictions. They are also used to express politeness, mainly by the younger age group to older people.

**6.1.3. Commiseration Greeting**

Commiseration greetings are expressions used to show concern to one another in Ngamambo, and everyone in the community uses them.

- 6a.** *nyám nyót wirə yé?é?*  
meat skin to be WH-  
"How is your health?"
- 6b.** *à éni-é gwéni?*  
You(sg) to spend the night sleep  
"Did you sleep well? Alternatively, "how did you sleep?"
- 6c.** *é-ngé?é wé zéé wé abórabó'd*  
trouble Det. see you Sorry  
"Sorry for your loss" or "Accept my condolences."

The expressions in example 6 (a, b, & c) above represent commiserating greeting forms. The Mbu people use them to establish "solidarity", "affirming relationships," and "share in the plight" of one another when found in an unfortunate, sad or desperate position/situation. It can be



expressed in two ways: firstly, showing concern and sharing in the plight of someone with a poor health condition, as described in example 6(a) and (b) above, and secondly, expressing “concern”, “consolation”, and “comfort” to a suffering individual as described in example (c) above. Also, in the case of consolation, the sympathiser uses the form in (c) alongside a non-verbal gesture of a pat on the back or shoulder of the bereaved. This is mainly done when the sad incident is very recent, and the concern is still in disarray/shock. Based on interview responses, these greeting forms are expressly used by both adults and youths. However, this greeting form 6(c) *é-ngé?é wé zéé wé ab’rab’id* cannot be used by a young person in addressing an older adult with such gestures. We observe that 6c is used primarily within speakers of the same age group, which makes it appropriate and accepted.

Most often, the response to condolence greetings from the bereaved is “silence”, “a wink”, “nodding of the head”, or *miyà* “thanks”, which shows acknowledgement and appreciation of the kind gesture and concern. These greeting forms in example 6 above also symbolise politeness and express how hospitable and caring the Mbu people are, especially to their fellow brothers/sisters, not leaving out strangers or visitors.

#### **6.1.4. Welcome Greetings**

These expressions portray how hospitable and accommodating the Mbu man can be. It is used by everyone in the community, whether male, female, old or young. Consider the illustration of some welcome forms in Ngamambo

<b>7a.</b>	<i>à</i>	<i>fɛ</i>	<i>yé?é?</i>	<b>7b.</b>	<i>à</i>	<i>yéné</i>	<i>tiktsəm</i>
	You(sg)	Prst. Perf.	com e		you	walk-inf	good
	you	have	com e		you	to travel	well
	"you are welcome."				"did you travel well?" or "Did you have a safe journey?"		

These forms of Greeting in 7a & b above express how “receptive” and “accommodating” the Mbu people are to their fellow brothers and sisters. The Greeting of 7(b) is commonly used by older people, which expresses their superiority and responsibility for the person they are addressing. Also, the expression in 7(b) can be manipulated and figuratively used to give an appraisal for a mission successfully carried out. When used, the speaker intends to appreciate an individual's action. For instance, when a young man brings home a lady he wants to marry as a wife, this lady is accepted by his parents and family. In this situation, the parents would say /à yénè tiktsóm/. The speaker intends to say that he has made a good choice for his spouse. It can further be manipulated when used as a question to inquire if an individual was successful in whatever they set out to do.

#### 6.1.5. Festival Greetings

These are expressions which are used in Greeting during festive periods or events in the Mbu community

##### New Year

8.	<i>é</i>	<i>númā</i>	<i>fié</i>	<i>ézà'á</i>
	det	glad	new	See-pst Op
			year	

"Happy the New Year has met me" or Happy New Year."

The Mbu people mostly use the form of Greeting in example 8 above to express “joy” and “appreciation” for getting into a new year. It is used amongst different age groups. It is a form of Greeting expressed by an individual to themselves, and it can also be used by someone to another with the same intention. It is an expression used by every age group and sex in the Mbu community to acknowledge the dawn of a new year.

#### 6.1.6. Status Greeting

These are forms of greetings expressed to an authority such as the Fon of the village, the sub-chiefs, and the heads of the family (commonly

called in Ngamambo; **neih** (*a form of greeting someone who is a title holder*), “successor to the father of the Family”. For instance, in greeting the Fon or Chief of the village, the individual is expected to bend down to the front (with the head facing the ground and hands put together), performing the gesture of clapping the hands three times and then placing them to their mouth before saying **mbeh** “chief”. This gesture must be done at any given time before addressing the Fon. The onomatopoeic sounds produced from the clapping of hands symbolise praise and acknowledgement of the authority to be addressed.

Also, this form of salutation is used by the Mbu individuals to create one another by whistling. This Greeting is performed by whistling in a particular rhythmic pattern. This whistling sound symbolises the Identity of the Mbu man or woman. When performed and heard, the hearer understands a brother or sister of his/hers from the same village is around and wishes you well. It is a greeting peculiar to Ngamambo speakers (i.e., natives of Mbu-Baforchu).

Furthermore, the Greeting between an elder and a younger person in Mbu is always supposed to be initiated by older people stretching forth their hands for a handshake. In comparison, the younger person sends forward their right hand, supported below with the left hand. No younger person has the right to initiate a handshake with an elder; if this is done, it is seen as a sign of gross disrespect.

In Ngamambo, greetings can also mark deference to God Almighty and other supernatural beings such as ancestors.

<p><b>9a</b> <i>nyèk mb à-wɔ̀ yri' kàŋ</i></p> <p>.     <i>ɔ' á</i></p> <p>God   sm   3pl-   pp   up</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">aux</p> <p>“God, you who is in Heaven.”</p>	<p><b>b.</b> <i>nyèkɔ' wɛ' fɔ̀n</i></p> <p>God   au   Chie</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">x    f</p> <p>"Jesus is Lord."</p>
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The greetings expressed in examples 9(a & b) above are greetings used by Ngamambo speakers who are Christians referring to the Almighty God. They use these greetings as “adoration” and “showering of praises”. It is believed that acknowledging His greatness will please His heart and allow Him to shower His blessing on us humans. This is the illocutionary act of showering praises to the Provider and Creator, accompanied by the gesture of raising hands and heads towards heaven. Thus, these expressions fulfil the maxim of quality, reflecting the expression's truthfulness.

Greetings performed to the ancestors are expressed during libation rites. In this situation, the notable begins by reverencing their ancestors of past years by acknowledging and praising them. These forms of acknowledging them every time during libation reveal a sign of reference and respect towards their authority. Contrary to the opinion of Searl (1969), who sees Greeting as verbal formulas with virtually no propositional content, the data and discussions above in Ngamambo prove this claim inappropriate. For instance, from examples 3, 4, and 5, we observe that not all greetings are wholly predictable and entirely lacking propositional content,

## 6.2. **Non-verbal greeting forms**

The focus on non-verbal Communication has been critical in the study of greetings as it reveals some attributes across cultures. Nonverbal greeting forms are communication cues that say a lot without you having to say anything at all. The most common nonverbal way of Greeting is the waving or shaking of hands, which is a universal feature. However, Ngamambo manifests a wide range of non-verbal cues of greetings such as whistling, supporting the hand, taking off the hat/cap, clapping hands and gesticulating, facial expression, and eye gaze, amongst others.

The non-verbal greeting form of waving or shaking hands is mainly accompanied by a verbal expression, as the greeting forms presented in

examples 4(a, b, & c) in the social context of parting ways. This greeting cue is used across the social variables of sex, age and status, wherein the younger person can wave his hands to an older adult and vice versa when separating and even amongst interlocutors of the same sex and social status.

Unlike waving hands, removing the hat/cap is a non-verbal greeting form mainly carried out by the male sex. This mode of Greeting is bound by age and sex. This form of Greeting is manifested when the younger person greets an older person, demonstrating politeness and respect for older people. Also, when elders with age differences address each other, the younger adult performs the non-verbal act of pulling off his hat before talking to the older adult. This act of Greeting is peculiar to the Mbu people as it expresses respect and is culture-bound.

Another important aspect of non-verbal Greeting in Ngamambo is whistling. The whistling sound's tune and rhythm are unique and different from any other sound produced. This particular whistling rhythm of Greeting by the people symbolises the cultural Identity of the mbu man as it arouses the feeling of belonging and oneness. Also, clapping hands and gesticulation are non-verbal cues of Greeting that are culturally bound. This Greeting demonstrates the bringing of closed palms together and accompanying it with a bow of the head, and the right-hand forms a fist, which is used to cover the mouth before addressing royalty, most especially the Fon. This form of Greeting symbolises the respect and reverence of power status in the Mbu community.

Also, it was noticed that the Mbu community, in their daily interactions, make use of a lot of gestures and facial expressions, which have a significant bearing on the Identity of the Mbu citizen. For instance, the gesture where the speaker makes a fist silently raises the hand frontward and shakes it, pointing at someone from a distance or at close range, is

interpreted as a sign of respect and recognition. This gesture as a form of Greeting is used both by adults and youths when greeting notables and title holders within the community.

### **7. Impact of Greetings in Ngamambo**

Greetings are essential in the day-to-day activities of the Mbu community and form part of the cultural identity as they are a crucial component of the communicative competence of the speakers of Ngamambo and reveal the extent of social interaction in the community.

The greeting culture in Ngamambo demonstrates the cordial relation and the formal and informal social status of its speakers coming in contact with each other. Thus, it functions in building and maintaining social relationships and upholding the culture and Identity of the people. For instance, it derives pleasure, especially when rendered alongside the ace expression (smiles) and other nonverbal gestures of positive remarks.

Also, contrary to Kendon and Ferber's (1973) interpretation of eye-gaze aversion symbolising the fear of aggression during certain phases of human encounters, in the Mbu community, it is a non-verbal form of Greeting performed by the youths and symbolises respect for older people. The gesture of eye contact as a form of Greeting in Mbu is controversial as its usage could signal varying implications. Following the cultural norms, a youth is not welcome to engage in intense eye contact with an adult while exchanging greetings. It is interpreted as challenging and disrespectful. However, eye contact can be maintained amongst speakers of the same age group and close family and friends, which symbolises familiarity and intimacy

### **8. Conclusion**

In Ngamambo, like in most Grassfields Bantu languages, the culture of Greeting is of vital importance and significance, especially in portraying the Identity of the people. The study has demonstrated that Greeting is an essential component of the communicative competence of the

speakers of Ngamambo. It reveals the extent of social interaction in the community. This study will benefit teachers, Linguists, and the Mbu community. The teachers will exploit the data to teach paralinguistic features in Communication and the relationship between intonation and meaning. On the part of Linguists, the data will inform curriculum designers of the importance of vulgarising African languages by documenting the language glossaries for posterity. Lastly, for the Mbu community, this study will serve as a reference document, significantly enhance the teaching of Ngamambo and a reference document for other researchers to exploit.

Hence, the sociolinguistics study of greeting forms in Ngamambo is not simply for phatic Communication but is seen as a means to an end, given that the Mbu people use the platform of greetings to perform other functions such as commiseration, commendation, accommodation, hospitality and assertion of group identity. Not all aspects of greetings in Ngamambo have been exploited in this study; for instance, an element such as the influence of occupation, as a sociolinguistic variable on the choice of greetings, still needs to be investigated. Also, the way people greet in other folklore genres, sacred greetings in shrines, and traditional cults are still to be investigated. This study has established that the Mbu people use the Speech Act of Greeting to express their concern, solidarity, hospitality, and respect for one another. It has also shown that Greeting is an important aspect or activity within the community, embedded with so much cultural meaning. Hence, the sociolinguistic importance of Greeting in the language is worth documenting and preserving, providing valuable data that can enhance the pedagogical value of language in implementing education in the mother tongue.

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