

A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF THANKING STRATEGIES IN CAMEROON SOCIAL MEDIA

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<https://doi.org/10.59009/ijllc.2026.0213>

Received Date:16 July 2026/Published Date:30 August 2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigates thanking strategies used by Francophone Cameroonian speakers of English (CamFE) on social media platforms, with particular focus on Facebook, Whatsapp and Messenger. Drawing on Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) as its theoretical anchors, the research analyses 122 naturally occurring thanking utterances collected from public social media pages and groups of Cameroonian Francophone speakers of English communities within 2020-2022. The study identifies and categorises the dominant thanking strategies in Cameroonian context which inflects the pragmatics of gratitude online. Findings reveal five major thanking strategies, including explicit expression of gratitude, which is highly used form of thanking strategies with 36.89%. Thanking in response to receiving good wishes follows with 25.41% instances, then compliments response thanking with 19.63%, stating reason with 13.94% and the least among these forms of thanking + intensifiers which is 4.10%. The study contributes to the growing body of research on African digital pragmatics and underscores the importance of contextual factors in shaping online speech acts.

Keywords: Thanking strategies, speech acts, social media, pragmatics, African digital communication, francophone Cameroonian.

1. INTRODUCTION

The act of thanking is one of the most universally practised speech acts across human cultures, yet the forms, frequencies, and sociopragmatic motivations behind expressions of gratitude are far from uniform. Across different cultural, linguistic, and social contexts, the way individual's express gratitude reflects deeply embedded values regarding social hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, and communicative norms. The emergence of social media as a dominant communicative space has added a new and dynamic dimension to the study of speech acts, as digital platforms enable users' unique affordances for interaction that differ significantly from face-to-face or traditional written communication. In Cameroon, the study of language use has been shaped by the country's unique sociolinguistic configuration. Situated at the crossroads of West and Central Africa, Cameroon is often described as 'Africa in miniature' due to its extraordinary cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. The coexistence of two colonial languages, English and French, alongside with over 280 indigenous languages, two official languages (English and French), and a widely spoken contact variety known as Cameroonian Pidgin English. Social media platforms, which have experienced explosive growth in

Cameroon over the past decade, have become important arenas for the negotiation and performance of these multilingual identities.

Research on digital pragmatics has expanded significantly in recent years, most studies continue to draw on data from Western or Asian contexts, with African digital communication remaining peripheral to mainstream scholarship. Many scholars highlight that the impact on how language is produced and interpreted is an important aspect and an inherent object of analysis for pragmatics (Hanifa, Nurditasari & Natsir, 2021; Hui-Wen & Siaw-Fong, 2023; Idrees & Ibrahim, 2020; Li, Liu & Zhang, 2023; Nurohmatin, 2020). Thanking, as a communicative act, has also attracted considerable scholarly attention within the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and cross-cultural communication. Researchers have approached the study of gratitude expressions from various angles, including speech act analysis (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), cross-cultural pragmatics (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Manes & Wolfson, 1981), and politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983). These foundational studies established that expressions of gratitude are socially regulated and that the choice of thanking formula is influenced by a range of social variables, including the relationship between interlocutors, the perceived cost of the benefit received, and the cultural norms governing appropriate acknowledgment.

Despite these growing body of research on digital pragmatics, it leaves a significant gap in the understanding of how African and specifically Cameroonian multilingual communities negotiate gratitude in online spaces. In this respect, the analysis of thanking strategies in Cameroon social media discourse remains underexplored. The present study addresses this limitation by analysing naturally occurring thanking utterances as they appear in authentic social media interactions, providing a more realistic and contextually grounded picture of how Francophone Cameroonian English speakers express gratitude online. This work seeks to answer the following pressing questions:

- (1) What are the types of thanking strategies used in Cameroonian social media discourse?
- (2) What are the pragmatic and textual features of these strategies?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted on thanking. Some of these studies investigated the strategies of thanking across cultures and within the same culture and others focused on its function. Farnia and Raja (2009) examined the speech act of expressing gratitude among Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The aim of the study was to compare and contrast the strategies used by Iranians and Americans in expressing gratitude. Data came from 2 groups of Iranian EFL learners who are at intermediate and advanced levels of language proficiency through written Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The corpus comprised 10 native speakers of Farsi from university students in Iran, and 10 American native speakers of English from American students being either exchange students or tourists. Results indicated that Iranian and American respondents employ the same type of strategies in responding to the DCT situations, but differ in the frequency of use of these strategies. In other words, the American respondents use fewer strategies in expressing gratitude in comparison with Iranian respondents. Findings also indicated that there is no correlation between language proficiency and use of strategies.

The work by Long (2010) explored the use of apology-gratitude expressions by Japanese native speakers using a written discourse completion task (DCT) with gratitude scenarios varied for social distance, social power, and degree of speaker benefit/hearer burden. Findings showed that social power had the greatest effect on the use of apology-gratitude expressions. The informants frequently produced such expressions when the hearer was a

teacher, regardless of the degree of benefit/burden being low (passing the sauce at the cafeteria table) or high (helping with a broken-down car). Long concluded that apologies in gratitude contexts helped interlocutors recover from 'expectedness' violations in role-relations. In the same fashion, Ahar and Eslami-Rasekh (2011) investigated the use of gratitude strategies by native English speakers, Persian native speakers and Persian EFL learners. The aim was to find the differences that may exist between these two languages and cultures in relation to social status and the size of imposition. Two instruments were used in their study, which are Nelson English Language Proficiency Test and a DCT. Questionnaire was administered to 134 EFL participants and 24 native English speakers. Results revealed that Persian EFL learners often transfer their first language pragmatic norms to the target language because of their perception of the universality of these norms. Findings indicated also that the Persian native speakers reacted more sensitively both to social status differences and to the size of imposition because they used more thanking expressions for a big favor compared to situations representing small favour.

Moreover, De Pablos-Ortega (2011) addressed the classification for the speech act of thanking as reflected in the textbooks for teaching and learning Spanish as a foreign language. A corpus of 64 coursebooks including 250 situations which represent the speech act of thanking was used for analysis. A questionnaire was also administered to 100 Spanish native speakers to supplement the data. It was pointed out that a classification of thanking consisted of four main categories which are thanking when receiving information previously requested, thanking after rejecting an offer and thanking after reacting or answering to the performance of an action. In contrast, Mulo Farenkia (2012) explored politeness strategies employed by a group of English-speaking Canadian University students when responding to gratitude expressions. The data collection was conducted through a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire. Findings showed five thanking responses strategies in the speech of Canadian university students that is, 'minimizing the favour, expressing pleasure, expressing appreciation, returning thanks, and acknowledging the thanks. The most commonly used strategy was 'minimizing the favour', followed by 'expressing appreciation' and the least used strategy was 'acknowledging the thanks. Results indicated also that the participants mostly employed constructions with no problem, welcome and pleasure.

Furthermore, Dalilan (2012) examined the gratitude strategies used by Indonesian EFL learners in responding to different situations. Data were collected from 17 sixth semester students (3 males and 14 females) of English Department of Education Faculty of Atmajaya Catholic University Jakarta by using through Discourse Completion Tasks. It was unveiled that the gratitude strategies used by the informants ranged from simple, brief thanking to lengthy and complex thanking. All the participants provided mixed speech act sets of thanking in the following social status (between a vice-president and newly hired personnel, indebtedness (because of money loan and meal treat) and breaking promise. It was found in the informal contexts like friends and the setting of public area that the participants tended to use simple or brief thanking. Besides, Siebold (2012) investigated the differences in expressing explicit and implicit thanking in Spanish and German. Data for the study was collected using eight open role-play situations designed to produce an expression of thanks. Subjects were 14 Spanish and 14 Germans aged 20 to 67 who participated in these open role-plays over several days tested by using a range of different instruments. Findings revealed that the norms of politeness differ markedly across the two cultures.

Besides, Baiqiu (2013) explored how to make the speech act of thanking appropriate and acceptable in dynamic context from the perspective of Chinese EFL learners who tend to respond in mute English or Chinglish in cross-culture thanking situation. The data was drawn

from the Chinese EFL spoken discourse based on cognitive and cultural comparative approach. Results showed that in a specific communicative situation, the learner has to manipulate his contextual cognition consciously and make an appropriate choice among linguistic or strategic forms. The choice-making needs considering adaptation to dynamic context like the objects of gratitude, the benefactor's psychological state and the communicative social context as the most important parameters. Al-Khawaldeh & Zegarac (2013) examined Jordanians' perceptions of the ways and the extent to which gender influences the communication of gratitude in some everyday situations. The corpus comprised 10 female and 10 male postgraduate Jordanian students aged between 28 and 33. The participants were interviewed about their perceptions and opinions about gender-related behavioral differences in eight social situations. Focus was also on how the informants would express gratitude to same and opposite gender interlocutors in each of the eight situations and why would they choose some ways of expressing gratitude in preference to others. Findings indicated that Jordanian women value expressing gratitude more than what Jordanian men do. In addition, women tend to communicate gratitude to women more than what men do to men, whereas men are particularly aware of the need to be polite when relating to women (especially in unfamiliar and high imposition contexts).

Studying the realisation strategies of thanksgiving and responding by Iraqi EFL Learners, Al-Zubaidy (2017) used a random sample of 50 Iraqi EFL learners and tested them on 20 discourse completion situations. The analysis of the data collected indicated that, in order to realise the speech acts of thanksgiving and responding, Iraqi EFL learners used nine and seven strategies respectively. To express sincerity and politeness. Al-Zubaidy also pointed out that Iraqis use formulaic expressions like blessing. Furthermore, Rafat (2018) explored thanking responses used by native speakers of Jordanian Arabic from a pragmatic perspective. The data collection process was carried in the months of June and July through tape recording of natural everyday interactions which occurred between the researchers and the respondents. The participants include taxi drivers, colleagues, friends, strangers, librarians, professors, doctors, restaurant workers, shop owners, cashiers and guards. An overall number of 436 expressions identified as thanking responses were collected. Findings revealed that acceptance is the most frequent type of thanking responses, followed by denial. Non-verbal gestures and no response were the least common types among the participants. Results indicated also that reciprocity was the fourth most frequent type preceded by comments, which occupied the third place.

Salayo (2021) examined the common gratitude strategies in different situations. The study used a 15-item Discourse Completion Test (DCT), 22 pre-service teachers in the province of Cavite in Philippines. An informal interview was conducted to validate the gathered data from the instrument used. Findings showed that the respondents highly used 'simple thanking', which reflects the simplicity and directness of the Filipino-linguistic choice in making responses on various occasions. Further results indicated that apart from the taxonomy-based thanking schemes, the respondents also used combined strategies and the 'no-response' strategy.

It is known from the forgone literature review that thanking strategies are not new in speech acts. However, with the fast-changing life styles that affect human practices, values, beliefs and language use, researches on thanking strategies are still updating, specifically its pragmatic forms. The scholars respectively used discourse completion task, course books, questionnaire, open role-play, spoken discourse, interviews and audio recordings for data collection.

3. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

The primary theoretical framework for this study is Speech Act Theory as developed by Austin (1962) in his landmark work *How to Do Things with Words* and subsequently elaborated by Searle (1969). Austin's fundamental insight was that utterances do not merely describe or report states of affairs but perform actions in the world. He distinguished between constative utterances, which describe or state facts and can be evaluated as true or false and performative utterances, which perform an action by the very act of being uttered. Searle (1969) also modifies Austin's classification of speech acts and comes up with five acts which may be regarded as an extension of Austin's illocutionary acts. The acts are representative, declarative, directive, expressive and commissive.

- Representatives or Assertives speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition such as reciting, asserting, claiming, describing, concluding, reporting, suggesting, predicting, stating, etc.
- Directives speech acts cause the hearer to take a particular action, such as requesting, commanding, advising, questioning, pleading, inviting, warning, etc.
- Commissives are speech acts that commit a speaker to some future action, such as promising, threatening, offering, guaranteeing, vowing, betting, challenging, etc.
- Expressives speech acts express the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition such as congratulating, thanking, apologising, appreciating, complaining, condoling, greeting, scolding, etc.
- Declaratives speech acts change the reality in accordance with the proposition of the declaration such as baptising, pronouncing someone guilty or pronouncing someone husband and wife, arresting, etc.

Thanking falls unambiguously within the category of expressives, which Searle defines as speech acts whose illocutionary point is to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition with respect to the state of affairs specified in the propositional content. For this study, Speech Act Theory provides the analytical tools to identify and classify thanking utterances in the corpus, to distinguish between direct and indirect strategies for expressing gratitude, and to examine the relationship between the form and the function of thanking in different interactional contexts. The theory's emphasis on the social and institutional dimensions of speech acts is particularly useful for understanding how thanking operates as a socially meaningful act that both reflects and reinforces the relational dynamics of Cameroonian francophone English speaker's social media communities.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach. It combines qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative frequency to provide both an in-depth understanding of thanking strategies and a systematic overview of the distribution of these strategies across the corpus obtained from Cameroonian social media. Data was gathered through screenshots based on the francophone Cameroonian speakers of English content messages from Messenger, WhatsApp and Facebook. All the content messages on these social media platforms were collected within 2020-2022. The population of this research comprises 347 informants among which 227 males and 120 females who speak English as they are characterised by a way of written and spoken English termed as Cameroon Francophone English (CamFE). Facebook and WhatsApp data are selected from group chats among colleagues on one hand, and among friends on the other hand. It also includes individuals' chats and chats between the researcher and colleagues on MSG. They are reached for the purpose of this study through WhatsApp platforms. The researcher and the field assistants selected the text messages in which the

features of thanking strategies are found before screenshotting them. At the level of the analysis phase, user names and identifying information were anonymised in all excerpts presented in the analysis in this manner: WhatsApp (WHAP 01 to WHAP 340), Facebook (FBK 01 to FBK 210) and Messenger (MSG 01 to MSG 57).. Figure 1 presents some sample of data collected.

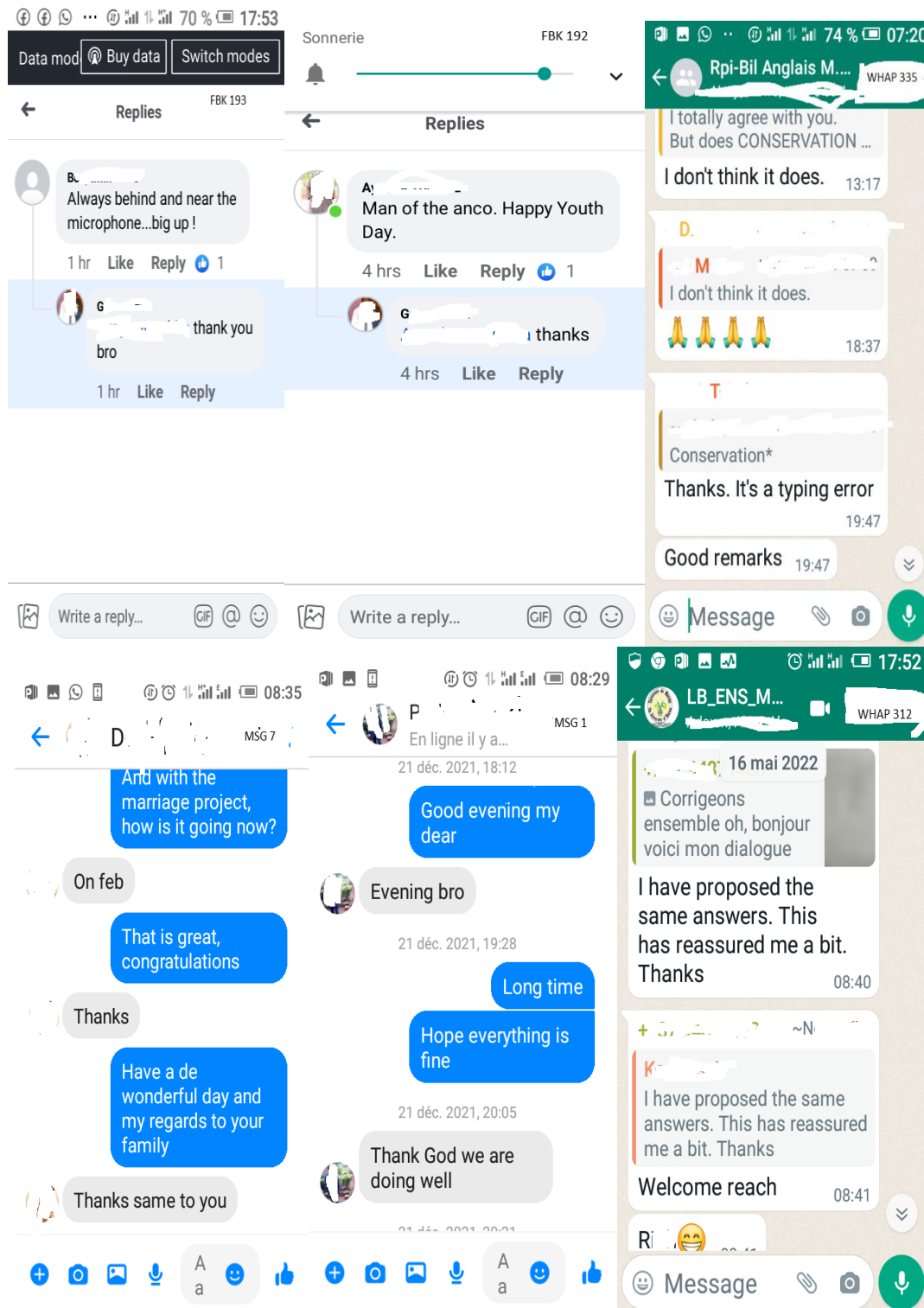


Figure 1: Sample of screenshots

From the preceding screenshots, one can observe the types of thanking strategies. This technique is applied to show that the data obtained from the informants are purely genuine. The primary data in this work forms 207 screenshots. More data are found in the appendix.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

In the research on the speech act of thanking in and across languages and cultures, it has been shown that the way gratitude is verbally expressed varies, ranging from simple giving thanks in a single speech act such as 'thanks', 'thank you' or that is kind of you, to the more extensive, 'I appreciate X', 'I am thankful for X', 'I am grateful for X', 'Please accept my thanks for X'. This section discusses the various forms of thanking situations and thanking strategies.

5.1. Thanking situations and thanking strategies

As Wong (2010) states, the interlocutor's choice of different thanking strategies is influenced by 'specific situational conditions' (p.1252). The type of benefit to be derived from expressing gratitude is an important situational condition in which the thanker considers. The person offering the gratitude has to have a valid reason for thanking in the preceding context. 'Thank you' expressions may often be required by social convention. The choice of a gratitude expression is largely dependent on how the thanker evaluates what the benefactor did for him/her and how the expressions function. In this section, a report on the major thanking strategies which were identified in Cameroon social media is presented. See the thanking strategies in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of thanking strategies

N°	Thanking strategy	Number of examples			TOTAL
		WHAP	FBK	MSG	
1	Explicit expression of Gratitude	27	13	5	45(36.89%)
2	Thanking in response to receiving good wishes	19	11	1	31(25.41%)
3	Compliments response Thanking	15	9	-	24(19.63%)
4	Stating reason	11	4	2	17(13.94%)
5	Thanking +intensifiers	5	-	-	5(4.10%)
Total		77	37	8	122

Table 1 indicates 5 different forms of thanking strategies that have been used in Cameroon social media with an overall total of 122 occurrences. Statistics show that explicit expression of gratitude is the most used form of thanking strategies it was used 27 times on WHAP, 13 times on FBK and 5 times MSG reaching 36.89%. The possible reason behind this prevalence could be the sign of recognition and love for the gestures done to the thanker. Thanking in response to receiving good wishes follows with 19 occurrences on WHAP, 11 occurrences on FBK and 1 occurrence on MSG equal to 25.41% instances. Then compliments response thanking used 9 times on WHAP and 9 times on FBK with 19.63% percentage of general use. Stating reason is equally used as it records 11 instances on WHAP, 4 instances on FBK and 2 instances on MSG with 13.94% percentage. The least among these forms of thanking + intensifiers used 5 times only on WHAP with 4.10%. The detailed analysis of thanking

strategies among the francophone speakers of English in Cameroon social media is done in turn below.

5.1.1. *Explicit expression of gratitude*

In the same way as apologies, expressions of gratitude are produced as a reaction to a previous action and have as objective to restore the balance in the social relations between the speaker and the hearer. This category of thanking is based on the aspect of offering gratitude by usage of an elliptic construction. On several occasions, this form of verbal behaviour was intensified by the interactants in Cameroon social media platforms. However, one can argue that intensification was not always linked to the benefactor's efforts to please the beneficiary (Jautz, 2013). For instance, in some almost identical situations of explicit expression of gratitude, the speaker makes use of the common elliptical expression 'thank you' in some cases but an intensified version of 'thanks' in the others as seen in the instances below:

- (1) *Thank you* very sincerely dear (WHAP 01-2020-male)
- (2) *Thank you* bro (WHAP 03-2020-male)
- (3) a) *Thanks* bro
b) *yu're welcome* (WHAP 32-2021-males)
- (4) a) *Thank you* so much brother
b) *you are welcome*
a) *hi bro, don't tell me that you are already* (WHAP 142-2021-males)
- (5) a) *Thanks* sister
b) *how are you* (FBK 170-2022-male/female)
- (6) a) *thank God*
b) *when get some, please forward them to me too, can someone help me with the themes of bilingualism weeks of previous editions?* (WHAP 151-2022-males)

From these different extracts, the addressers are grateful in one way or the other. The sincerity conditions of explicit expression of gratitude used here is manifestly a kind of acknowledgement towards the hearer(s). To show their satisfaction to the audience, the speakers often make use of the intensifiers as the case of 'very sincerely' in (1) and 'so much' in (4). These forms of the word's gratitude are often directed to a close friend or partner 'dear' in (1), to relatives or implicitly friend's 'bro'/'brother' or 'sister' as in the case of examples (2) to (5), showing therefore an indirect speech act. Yet, it can also be addressed to the Almighty himself 'thank God' in (6) to acknowledge his grace, mercy or favour in their individual lives. The next section focuses on thanking in response to receiving good wishes.

5.1.2. *Thanking in response to receiving good wishes*

An expression of gratitude in response to good wishes address is another form of thanking strategies that is observed among Cameroonian francophone speakers of English in their daily conversations in the three social network platforms under study. The speech events in which they are expressed are observed in the following types of excerpts:

- (7) a) *Job that you guys have carried on. United we stand. Let's continue in the same direction. A nice weekend to all my colleagues of this group*
b) *Thank you* very much our B... (WHAP 24-2021-males)
- (8) a) ... *Thanks* same to you
b) *Happy New Year 2022 to all the members of this wonderful family. May our mighty Father in heaving look upon us and grant us our deepest desires* (WHAP 112-2022-female/male)
- (9) a) *happy New Year*
b) *thank you, my comrade happy new year, to you also* (FBK 127-2021-males)
- (10) a) *Happy new day with the Lord. I love you all and stay blessed*

- b) *thank you* very much P...be blessed also (WHAP 43-2021-male)
- (11) a) *Thanks* and the same to *you*, do *you* know that *I* finally forgot to help *you*? Is *it* still valid or the work is already done?
- b) still valid, good evening (WHAP 144-2022-female/male)
- (12) a) *Thanks*. *I* stopped reading at “No”
- b) *thanks* R... (WHAP 204-2022-female)
- (13) a) Man of anco, happy youth day
- b) *thanks* (FBK 192-2022-males)

To paraphrase Grice (1989,p.26), our talk are characteristically to some degree at least cooperative efforts and that each participant recognises in them to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least mutually accepted direction. In like manner, the scenario observed in example (8) sets a perfect cooperative effort among the participants to show some kind of togetherness and prompt reactions from all of them in all circumstances. This is undoubtedly what has been done when one of them experienced a sad event in his life and the rest of the group members joined together and assisted him. They are encouraged to the extent that they wish to keep the same pace that is, working in the same mutually accepted direction. This good wish is therefore welcome by an expression of thanks in response (7 b). In addition, instances from (8) to (13) indicate clearly that the thankers respond to good wishes addressed to them. The thanking strategies here can be done by the expression ‘thank you’ as in (9) and (10) or simply by the word ‘thanks’ as in (11), (12) and (13). Gratitude is a thankful a direct appreciation for what an individual receives, that is why receiving good wishes shows through these interactions that there is a strong social relationship between participants and therefore appreciating the address of gratitude. Apart from receiving good wishes, the hearers can also receive compliments. In this respect, the subsequent section presents and analyses some key samples of thanking strategy related to receiving compliments response.

5.1.3. Compliments response thanking

Thanking expressions occur also in Cameroon social media as a response to a compliment which is made either to reinforce or help to create solidarity among the interactants. Compliment is a positive speech act that expresses friendship and increases rapport among the people (Yousefvand, 2010). In other words, it can be defined as good comments for others, that is, comments that are usually given are related to appearance or what has been done by people. The identified compliments formulae in this study are connected to one’s physical appearance and achievements as shown in what follows.

- (14) a) Marvelous! What an awesome God! More grace. *My* regards to *your* wife
- b) *thanks*, *my* brother. How is *your* family? (WHAP 125-2021-males)
- (15) a) oh wonderful, excited thing forever, hello to *you* all
- b) *thank you* (FBK 45-2021-males)
- (16) a) very nice
- b) *thanks* (FBK 123-2020- female/male)
- (17) a) Chic sister
- b) *thank you* (FBK 132-2022-male/female)
- (18) a) Look good woman
- b) *thanks* (FBK 186-2022-male/female)

Facts gleaned from (14) above show that interlocutors are engaged in the scenario within which the complimenter chooses descriptive adjective ‘what an awesome God’ to acknowledge firstly the hand of God upon the complimentee in what he has implicitly achieved which is simply ‘marvelous’. In response to this compliment, the complimentee will also use ‘thanks

my brother' to show that the compliment is warmly accepted. Other occurrences from (16) to (17) are related to the addressees' physical appearance. In all the examples, the conversation is going on between two interlocutors who are close to each other. It is shown that each first speaker uses positive adjective to appreciate his suchlike. The use of interjection 'oh wonderful' and the adverb of degree (very) + the adjective (nice) indicates how far the complimenter are fascinated by the quality of the materials exposed by the complimentees. The hearers are also in turn grateful for the appreciation and thus respond by 'thank you' or 'thanks'. The following section is dedicated to thanking strategy by stating reason of thanking.

5.1.4. Stating reason

Stating reason is also discovered as a form of thanking strategy among Cameroonian francophone speakers of English on social media. The examples extracted from the data collected show that the thanking formula is about the word 'thank you' or 'thanks' showing the reason for thanking in the form of a prepositional phrase beginning with the preposition 'for'. Let's consider the following examples.

(19) *thanks* for adding me oh, let's be one for the benefit of all (WHAP 57-2021-male)

(20) a) *I beg* just continue with other classes

b) ...*Thank you* too for your presence

c) yes I will, you are welcome (WHAP 222-2022-females)

(21) a) *thanks* for sharing

b) *ur* welcome (WHAP 183-2021-males)

(22) ... *thanks* for the info Mme (WHAP 199-2022-female)

In these samples of thanking strategies, it is notable that the word *thanks you/thanks* + *for* (reason) is used in the situation where the speakers provide the reason of their acknowledgements towards the hearers. It is noteworthy to say that in example (19), the thanker is happy to be added in the group in which he deemed is 'for the benefit of all'. Also, the presence of one can be more pleasant for some participants in the group in such a way that the speaker acknowledges the evidence of that person's presence and therefore expresses his gratitude as it is shown in (20b). In addition, the role played by others is to share information which is relevant to all as the examples (21) and (22) display. In the following section, the thanking sequences or thanking strategy referred to as *thanking* + *intensifiers* is discussed.

5.1.5. Thanking + intensifiers

The natural conversations in Cameroon social media unveil also that the thanking formula attested in the data is sometimes followed by an intensifier. The following constitutes some selected instances of thanking strategy related to *thanking* + *intensifiers*:

(23) a) *iv* get u, *r u* already at the market? Where *r u* so that I can come and meet u, *thank u very much*

b) you are welcome (WHAP 139-2021-males)

(24) a) *Thank you so much* brother

b) you are welcome. Hi bro, don't tell me that you are already heading to data analysis. If it is so I am too late oh! Let me embark quickly to your steps

a) not yet

b) ok (WHAP 142-2022-males)

The use of intensifiers 'very much' and 'so much' in the examples above stresses the quality of attitude of the interlocutor towards the addressee (s) in one way or the other. These utterances clearly indicate that the benefactor in each case has been greatly touched by the service rendered to him. The pragmatic function of this kind of thanking strategy is to provide

a reciprocal cooperative help between the interlocutors, being close to each other as a friend or brother.

6. CONCLUSION

This has explored the thanking strategies employed by Cameroonian social media users, guided by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) speech acts theory. Drawing on a corpus of 122 naturally occurring thanking utterances collected from Facebook, Whatsapp and Messenger, the study has yielded a set of findings that are both empirically robust and theoretically significant. It has been discovered that explicit expression of gratitude is the most used form of thanking strategies with 36.89%. The possible reason behind this prevalence could be the sign of recognition and love for the gestures done to the thanker. Thanking in response to receiving good wishes was also prevalent in Cameroon social media with 25.41% instances. The least thanking strategies used among Cameroonian francophone English speakers' communities online are compliments response thanking with 19.63%, stating reason with 13.94% and thanking + intensifiers with is 4.10%. These patterns enrich our understanding of the social organisation of thanking behaviour and underscore the importance of contextual sensitivity in pragmatic analysis.

The study is restricted to textual data from three platforms, and future research should examine multimodal thanking, incorporating emoji, images, and audio-visual content across a broader range of platforms and digital contexts. A longitudinal study tracking the evolution of thanking strategies over time would be also a valuable contribution to the field. Additionally, direct investigation of Cameroonian users' perceptions, attitudes, and metalinguistic awareness regarding thanking would enrich the analysis.

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Appendix

