

# English General Greetings in the Ghanaian Sociolinguistic Context

**Yaw Sekyi-Baidoo & Louisa A. Koranteng**

*Dep't of English Education, University of Education, Winneba*

## Abstract

*Of all the cultural artefacts which diffuse from one context to the other, language elements are perhaps the most frequent and pervasive. The English language has been with the people of Ghana in different levels of contact for over four centuries. The last of these centuries has seen English pervasively as the official language and also as a lingua franca in a variety of linguistic contexts. It is therefore to be expected that it has in many different ways been changed in order to reflect the culture and worldview of the people among whom the language is now being used.*

*The present discussion examines the way in which English general greetings have diffused into the Ghanaian sociolinguistic context. It examines the various levels of change that the greetings have undergone in the Ghanaian context. Such changes are seen to include the verbal and structural content of the greetings, the phonological realization, sociolinguistic distribution as well as their pragmatic implications.*

*The discussions would also examine these changes in the light of the process of nativisation English is undergoing in the Ghanaian linguistic context as in other second language environments.*

**Keywords:** *Indigenization, Temporal Greetings, Greetings, Enquiries,*

## Introduction

The issue of indigenisation or the nativisation of English has been quite paramount in current research into the nature and use of English in non-native communities. (See Dako (2001), Gyening (1997), Bamgbose (1992, 1995), Ahulu (1994), Owusu-Ansah (1994), Bokamba (1993), Adetugbo (1991), Afolayan (1987), Akere (1982), and Bailey (1973). The question would be asked as to what the purest or correct form of the English language is, especially when English and all languages, like living organisms, grow and change both in native and non-native contexts, historically, geographically and sociolinguistically. One of such fears about the purity of English in non-native contexts has been expressed by Quirk (1990) who laments that

*....interests in varieties of English have got out of hand and has started blinding teachers and the taught to the central linguistic structure from which the varieties might be varying.*

Over the years, however, it has become necessary to 'domesticate' the English language basically in response to the differences between the linguistic and cultural structure and ideas which English as a language offers and represents, and the language, culture and world view of the peoples among whom the English Language has had to be used. This linguistic need has been expressed in very certain terms by Achebe (1972:62) which to him results in what he calls 'a new English'. Gyening's position on this is also worth noting:

*...as English spreads to all parts of the world, it has become necessary for its non-native speakers to fashion out for themselves words for concepts which are in their indigenous languages and cultures but which are absent from the English language and culture. (Gyening, 1997: 1)*

The road to the nativisation of English has, however, meant more than the creation of new words. It has also involved the reinterpretation and reification of English structure in order to suit them to the non-native contexts. Owusu-Ansah's position reminiscent of Achebe (ibid) captures the effect of non-

native cultures on the English language – a situation which describes the use of English general greetings among other aspects of English in the Ghanaian sociolinguistic context:

*... the socio-cultural conditions under which English is used in the outer circle makes it inevitable that its forms will depart from that of the native varieties...*

(Owusu-Ansah, 1997:23)

The concern of this paper is to investigate how far the English general greetings as used in the Ghanaian context reflect an attempt to nativise the English Language. Looking at the use of these greetings in formal as well as non-formal contexts, it asserts that whereas there are attempts at the formal level to maintain the structure, use and interpretation of Standard English (hereafter SE) general greetings, there is a remarkable nativisation of these greetings at the informal level in structure, use and as well as pragmatic meaning, and this is enhanced by the creation of new greetings and responses in English.

The study is in response to the fact that much of the phenomenal studies into nativisation have tended to concentrate on such aspects as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. These include Bobda (1994), Dadzie (1986), Awonusi (1990, 1994), Koranteng (1992, 2006), Adjaye (1987) Ahulu (1992, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997), Gyasi (1990, 1991), Sey (1973). This is as though to confirm Stevens (1983) who describes a non mother-tongue variety as ‘...a localised form of English identifiable through its distinctive mixtures of features of grammar, lexis, pronunciation, discourse and style’. Similarly, to Ahulu (1994), it is at the morphological, syntactic, phonological, and lexical levels that the various non-native varieties can be identified. Not much has been done on the use of specific sociolinguistic elements in the non-native communities.

Similarly, studies into greetings as a sociolinguistic element or as a speech act have tended to concentrate on traditional forms with little attention to nativised or cross-linguistic forms. For instance, Akindele (2007) studies Sesotho greetings; Fadipe (1970) and Akindele (1997) investigate Yoruba greetings, Dzameshie (2002), Ameka (1991), Egblewogbe (1990) have researched into Ewe greetings, and Emeni (2000), Irvine (1974) and Ibrahim et al (1976) into greetings in northern African communities. Yet one very important situation in the new modern African state and indeed in many third world countries is the existence of formal, usually European, second or third language which exist side-by-side the indigenous languages and their cultures. It would be important in view of the realities of nativisation to look at the realisation of European pragmatic forms, such as greetings, in their new cultural context to see the impact of the confluence of the two cultures on the realisation of the non-native pragmatic resources.

Contrary to Searle (1969), Kasper (1989), Bowen, Madsen and Hilfenty (1985) and Wilkins (1976) and others for whom greetings are semantically or propositionally empty, and frozen or formulaic routine items, we see greetings in the way of Laver (1981: 304) as being far from being a ‘...relatively meaningless and mechanical social behaviour...’ and with Akindele (2007) as ‘...extremely important strategies for the negotiation and control of social identity and social relationships between participants in a conversation.’ If greetings have contextual use and meaning which is influenced by the ethnography of the context, then we would in the light of Achebe (1976) and Owusu-Ansah (1994) hypothesise that English general greetings used in a different (non-native) cultural context with different factors of ethnography are likely to reflect different form and pragmatic meanings from what pertains in the native context.

## Methodology

To obtain the data for this paper, the writers observed in all seven hundred and fifty (750) instances of greetings involving the use of English in different contexts – the formal, the informal as well as the colloquial, which, for the purpose of this paper, would be classified with the informal. The considerations of formality took into account factors such as participant equality and familiarity, the context of interaction manifesting in such issues as the purpose and exigencies of interaction, the participant roles as well as the expectations of the larger context. The contexts of greetings observed generally cut across different sub-linguistic cultures and involves people of different ethnic cultures. This was to ensure that the findings are representative of the general Ghanaian community.

In addition, the writers interviewed seventy-two (72) people on their views about the use of these greetings. Our respondents like those whose greetings were observed belong to different ethnic and social backgrounds.

## Discussions on SE General Greetings

By general greetings, we are referring to *temporal greetings* which are generally used to mark the three main demarcations of the day – morning, afternoon and the evening, which Dzameshie (ibid), calls 'Time-of-day' greetings; *the enquiries* which he calls 'How-are-you greetings'; as well as those that have been referred to as *valedictory greetings*, (Sekyi-Baidoo, 2006). Akindele (2007) refers to these 'valedictory greetings' as 'Ways of Parting / Leave - taking'. This study, however, will concentrate on temporal and enquiries.

As said earlier, English general greetings were observed in three main contexts within which English general greetings are used in Ghana. These are the formal, informal and colloquial contexts. This distinction is made still with the full understanding of the fact that the levels of formality for their wide variety cannot very easily be grouped to only three. This grouping has, thus, been made for the purposes of convenience. These groupings have sociolinguistic implications for the use of greetings as would be evident in the discussions. It would be realized, for instance, that the level of deviation from the SE greetings increases as formality reduces. Formality may be seen as the degree of strictness in the adherence to the rules of social interaction and to the institutional goals and expectations, (Sekyi-Baidoo, 2000). Thus, as formality reduces, interactants are more likely to express their deepest feelings and innovation, which becomes manifest in their use of greetings and responses.

### Temporal or Time-of-Day Greetings

The Standard English temporal greetings are tabulated below.

TIME	GREETING
Morning	Good Morning
Mid-Morning to early Afternoon	Good Day
Afternoon	Good Afternoon
Evening	Good Evening

### Time Demarcations

The time demarcations of the English temporal greetings in Ghana do not generally follow the demarcations in standard usage. The time associations of these greetings are made to conform generally to the time associations of the traditional greetings. Whereas 'Good Morning' is known to start from the earliest part of the day, the inception of 'Good Afternoon' and 'Good Evening' are not so clear-cut and agreed upon. For example except for the educated who use the watch or clock to determine the end of the morning (at 12.00 noon) and start of the use of 'Good afternoon' a minute after midday, the non-literate speakers use the weather or sunniness, and the perception of adequate length of the day to determine the start of the use of 'Good Afternoon'. Thus since weather changes from day to day, and the perception changes from person to person and even from day to day with the same individual, it is clear that the inception of the use of 'Good afternoon' will be very fluid. It was observed of the 126 instances of use by non-literate speakers that speakers used 'Good afternoon' earlier in sunny days than in rainy and cloudy weathers. The situation of the inception of 'Good evening' is quite similar to the use of 'Good afternoon.' The inception of 'Good evening' is earlier in rainy and cloudy days. On the other hand, in very sunny days or in days with longer days (and shorter nights), the inception of the use of 'Good evening' is delayed, sometimes to around 5.30 p.m.

The above account, especially about the use of 'Good afternoon' introduces us to the idea that the strict SE temporal considerations associated with the time-bound English greetings gave way to the generally fluid demarcation, most probably under the influence of the associations of the traditional temporal greetings.

The table below shows the view of respondents about the inception of the evening's greetings:

TIME DEMARCATION	HIGHLY-EDUCATED RESPONDENTS	NOT HIGHLY EDUCATED RESPONDENTS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
<i>From 3.30/4.00 p.m.</i>	4	26	30	<b>20</b>
<i>From 4.30/5.00 p.m.</i>	40	29	69	<b>46</b>
<i>From the beginning of sunset</i>	40	11	51	<b>34</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	84	66	150	<b>100</b>

From the table above our respondents included the well educated the middle-level people as well as people with minimal or least formal education. These respondents were randomly selected from the village, the sub-urban as well as the very urban settings. As from the table, a greater percentage of Ghanaians (46%) are of the idea that the evening starts from between 4.30 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. Others, 34%, associate the inception of the evening with sunset. Though the climatic and weather changes over the seasons in Ghana are not as drastic as in Britain, one cannot pin the setting of the sun to one particular time. It generally hovers between 4.00 p.m. and 6.00 p.m.

As evident, the level of education has effect on people's perception of the inception of the evening. As people get more educated, their idea of the inception of the evening tends to conform to or get nearer to SE perceptions. Of the thirty (30) respondents who associated the inception of the evening with the time between 3.30 and 4.00 p.m., 86.6% are not well educated formally. Discussions with them established that most of them are adults who rarely got beyond the middle school. Asked why they chose that time, most of them referred to the fact that whilst in school, they used 'good evening' at the closing school assemblies which were conducted between 3.30 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. at the primary and middle schools respectively. Since the time of the setting of the sun generally starts from 5.00 p.m. which is endorsed by the second group of respondents, we can conclude that most Ghanaians associate the inception of the 'good evening' temporal greetings with around 5.00 p.m.

## Indigenisation

Of the three temporal general greetings, 'good morning' and 'good evening' have diffused into most of the local languages, and are used in one way or the other as local or traditional greetings. Dzameshie (2002) reports, for instance, that these greetings are adopted among the Ewes as local or traditional greetings, and speakers, thus, use them without thinking they are using English greetings. A similar situation was observed among the Akans and the Gas, (Dakubu, 1981). It has not been very easy to explain why 'Good afternoon' has not been part of this diffusion. Possible reason as availed through this research is that even in the traditional setting, morning and evening interactions are most frequent and important. Consequently, the greetings associated with such interactions are opened would be more important. Three (3) informants explained that in the predominantly farming communities, the afternoons found most people on their farms and, thus, were not easily available for interactions where the greetings of the time would be used. On the other hand, where interactions occurred on the farm or in any such endeavours, incidental greetings such as 'Mema wo adwuma'/'Adwuma' (Akan. I bid you a successful working session) would be used instead of the temporal greeting for that time of day. Since the local forms themselves were not frequently used, it could be gathered that the English temporal greetings for the time could not also get so popular or frequently used as to diffuse into the local language and usage of the people.

Another reason assigned for the non-popularity and non-diffusion of 'good afternoon' is the complexity of its phonological constitution as compared to the two other temporal greetings. The phonological complexity of 'good afternoon' was difficult for the then predominantly illiterate people. 'Afternoon' has three syllables just as 'evening' – meaning that in terms of complexity, 'morning' has a greater likelihood of being diffused than 'evening' or 'afternoon'. However, the phonological constitution of 'after-

noon' makes it rather more difficult for adoption than 'morning' or 'evening'. 'Evening', for instance, has undergone phonological transformation in the indigenisation. /v/, a labio-dental fricative, is not found in the phonological inventory of most of the languages, and is, therefore, replaced with another labial /b/, which is, however, a bilabial plosive. Again, the last syllable '-ning' /nĩŋ/ is deleted. Even in Standard English, it is an unstressed syllable, and does not appear very prominent. The resulting structure /ibĩn/ was therefore easily assimilated into the local usage. 'Afternoon', on the other hand, has a much complex structure as indicated above. First, the /ft/ cluster is not familiar to the phonotactics of most local languages, and the most likely way to indigenise the word at this point would be through metathesis by which a vowel, most probably /i/ would be inserted between the two consonants, which would also increase the number of vowels to create another level of complexity and make the diffusion more difficult. Perhaps, it is to go round this complexity that the Ewes of Ghana decided to use /gude/ (Good day) (Dzameshie, 2002: 397) instead of the more characteristic 'Good afternoon' for the middle part of the day.

The phonological processes described above are not the only processes by which the greetings were structurally indigenised. In 'Good morning', 'good' is generally ellipted, and where it is realised, the arresting consonant /d/ is elided giving /gu/. Again, the vowel is generally realised as a short form of /u:/ instead of the more central and less high form /u/ which is more frequent and pervasive in the phonology of the local languages. Further, the second syllable of 'morning' – (-ing) /ĩŋ/ - is generally realised as a single vowel /ĩ/ with the other constituent of the syllable elided. 'Good morning', thus, realises in Ghanaian languages as /mɔŋĩ/, /gudumɔŋĩ/, /gumɔŋĩ/. In /mɔŋĩ/, - 'good' has been ellipted, and the arresting consonant of '-ning', [ŋ] is also ellipted leaving [nĩ]. In /gudumɔŋĩ/, the initial vowel is changed as explained above; a vowel /u/ is inserted between the last consonant of good [d] and the initial consonant of morning [m]; and 'morning' is reduced as in /mɔŋĩ/. In /gumɔŋĩ/ the initial vowel is changed as in /gudumɔŋĩ/; and the arresting consonant of 'good' is ellipted in order to avoid the [dm] cluster which necessitated the metathesis in /gudumɔŋĩ/.

With 'Good evening', however, 'good' is rarely deleted, though the '-ning' syllable is reduced as in 'morning', giving such realisations as /gudivĩ/ (See Dzameshie *ibid*) gudibĩ/ or /gudimĩ/ with the enlightened or the educated ones using the former. The /ĩ/ remnant of the reduced syllable, however, retains the nasal quality as is realised in the progressive assimilation in which the vowel takes the nasal quality of the proceeding /n/ sound. Thus, the assimilation occurs before the elision.

Another way of indigenisation is the incorporation of aspects of the English greetings in the local or receiving languages. In Akan, for instance, English general greetings are preceded by the 'I bid - ' introductory phrase: 'Me ma -'. One could therefore have 'Mema wo/mo mɔne' (I bid you good morning). Another remarkable feature of the diffused 'morning' is the use of reduplication which is a very important syntactic process in many Ghanaian languages. Such reduplication of [mɔŋĩ] is used especially where the greeted are in the plural and are of the same age set or social standing as the greeter. Associated with this reduplication is a remarkable level of informality, and this is why it is usually used among people of equal status or some intimacy or solidarity. To sustain the expected politeness in situations of deference, honorific address terms such as *Mpaninfo* (Elderly ones, Akan) or *Efo* (Older Kin, Ewe) etc.

The reduplication would normally not exceed two – 'mɔŋĩmɔŋĩ', but the extension of the reduplication normally reflects size or the scattered nature of the people being greeted as well as the level of intimacy and the low level of formality. The addition of evocatives 'o' or 'ɛ' to greetings as in 'Maakye o' or 'Maakye ɛ' is noticed in low formality or in situations seen to be traditional.

### Usage

It is worthwhile to note that where borrowing increases the vocabulary of a language without a corresponding increase in a semantic field, it creates synonymy and therefore choice, which is regulated by contextual, collocative as well as grammatical factors. In the borrowing of English greeting forms into the Ghanaian culture, the English forms does not replace the traditional or local ones; neither do; they operate in free variation with them. Rather, the two sets of greetings are used with clear socio-pragmatic conditions which are explained below.

The English-based greetings are used in contexts of familiarity or equality, and especially in contexts which can be regarded as having 'low formality'. Thus, it is more permitted from L to L, H to H and from H to L than from L to H. Dzameshie (2002) reports that sometimes some elderly people regard the choice of the borrowed greetings as an indication of a sour relationship. Again, English greetings or their indigenised forms are frowned upon in formal traditional contexts or even in informal contexts



where there are very important personalities such as chiefs or traditional priests. An attempt to use an English greeting in such socio-pragmatic context is regarded as a disregard for the traditional culture or the position and status of the traditional personalities. Similarly, it is generally unacceptable to use traditional greetings or the indigenised forms of English greetings in modern formal contexts where the English language is the expected code.

### ***Deviations in English Greetings***

The level of strictness to SE forms is associated also with the level of formality of the event. Thus, there is likely to be deviations to the SE forms in informal or colloquial contexts. At this section, we will discuss deviations to the SE form. The deviations include the ellipsis of 'good', the variation of the response, and the adoption of other English greetings.

#### ***Ellipsis of 'Good'***

Characteristic of the use of English general greetings in informal or colloquial contexts is the ellipsis of 'good' in levels of equality or intimacy. One would easily hear 'Afternoon', 'Morning' or 'Evening' without the adjective 'good'.

#### ***Variation of Response***

The SE response to general greetings involves basically a replication of the greeting phrase. Thus, one gives 'Good evening' and receives the same in return. In this case, we can call English general temporal greetings *replicative greetings*. Changes can be made only in the accompanying address phrases, which could be names or titles. Whereas this is maintained generally in formal contexts, a lot of variations are found in non-formal contexts. Where such deviations occur in formal contexts, they are normally from the H to the L, or from people of equal status, as indicated above. The following variations in the response were gathered from the research:

- ✓ Fine morning
- ✓ Thank you
- ✓ Fine/Good/Beautiful/ Right
- ✓ Correct.
- ✓ No mistake.

The distribution of the variations is represented on the table below:

RESPONSE	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	TOTAL	%
Morning	43	35.11	51	64.89	94	15.67
Fine morning.	63	35.83	77	64.17	120	20.00
Fine.	58	45.83	65	54.17	120	20.00
Yea	23	76.67	7	23.33	30	5.00
Thank you	40	40.40	59	59.60	99	16.50
Fine/Good/Beautiful/Right/Great	61	70.93	25	29.07	86	14.33
Correct.	32	91.43	3	8.57	35	5.83
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>320</b>		<b>287</b>		<b>607</b>	

That these 'deviant' responses (607) represent 86% of the responses of the 750 instances of greetings observed points to a tendency to deviate from the SE general greetings responses. Form the

interviews, it came out that the choice of these different responses allows the greeted to respond in accordance with the different aspects of the ethnography of the situation including participants and scene. There are situations in which people responded to the same person in different responses, and they explain that the contexts of the greetings vary and therefore call for different and befitting responses.

The variations point to among other things the idea that to many Ghanaians the response of the general temporal greetings is neither replicative nor formulaic. Being non-formulaic then, these responses are organised to reflect the context including, most notably, the relationship between the interactants, the level of formality as well as the mood or temperament of the one responding. This idea can be seen as a reflection of the nature of response in the traditional setting.

It is in the light of the above that the use of 'Fine', 'Thank you', 'Correct' and 'Good', 'Nice' or 'Beautiful' should sometimes be considered. As came out in the interviews, these terms are sometimes used to show the appreciation or satisfaction of the greeted for his being greeted. Unlike the others, however, 'Thank you' is acceptable in semi formal contexts where, generally, 'Fine Morning' is used.

'**Fine morning**' is considered the most formal of all the variations above and is sometimes used as an ordinary substitute for 'Good Morning'. 'Fine' is considered as a synonym or substitute for 'Good' and is used as a way of creating variety among a people within whom creating responses as seen earlier reflect the ethnography of communication and again is supposed to exhibit variety and creativity. As observed in the table above, it has the highest occurrence among the variations of responses, and it has little gender implications. Among the relationships in which it was observed to have been used were the **H+H, L+L, H+L, and L+H**, giving the impression that it has no implications for social stratification or inequality.

On the other hand, **Fine** is usually used among equals or from H to L. It is considered impolite except general address terms such as 'Sir', 'Madam' or filial ones such as 'Uncle', 'Auntie' or 'Daddy' are used. 'Fine' as a response should not be seen as a diminutive form of 'Fine Morning' which is generally as formulaic as the SE 'Good Morning' or 'Good Afternoon'. It is rather organised, as intimated earlier on, to reflect the mood of the speaker and his appreciation for his having been greeted. Its actual meaning is usually evident in the intonation with which is said.

One thing that comes out from the table is a general tendency for the female to stick to the more acceptable or semi-formal responses such as 'Fine Morning' and 'Thank you'. Generally, whereas the female seem to have a more frequent use of these responses, the male are always very far ahead in the use of responses such as 'Correct', 'No Mistake' 'Yea' which are considered most colloquial, as the cumulative and relative frequencies show; and males who use these response forms are usually between mid adolescence and the middle ages, pointing to the fact that perhaps people tend to be more formal with greetings responses as they grow.

## The Enquiry

Several forms of the enquiry are observed in Ghanaian spoken English:

How are you?	-	Fine
How are you doing?	-	Fine /I'm doing fine.
How's life?	-	Fine /Okay
How's life treating you?	-	So-so
How (now)?	-	So-so/ (We) can't complain
How be?	-	Cool / Cool things
How?	-	How? / so-so

Of these, the first two, 'How are you doing?' and especially 'How are you?' are considered quite formal, and are generally used from H to L or between people among whom there is little familiarity or intimacy. In many classrooms in the first cycle, 'How are you?' especially is used from school teachers and older visitors to the class or to the pupils, who respond: 'I/we are well, thank you, and you?' This enquiry like its equivalents in many Ghanaian languages, (Woho te sɛn? - Akan) is considered impolite from L to H, except it is prefixed with honorific titles and face-saving techniques, notable of which is the signalling of the fact that one knows in normal circumstances, such an enquiry is considered

inappropriate. Associated with the others, which are considered informal is the variation of their response. Thus, the responses listed only point to a tendency. In reality, each of the responses can be used for any other enquiries.

Among many people, both in local languages and in English, enquiries from L to H are *true* rather than *phatic* enquiries. Phatic enquiries are not really to enquire about the health or well-being of people. They are basically empty and are just for the maintenance of social relationships. On the other hand, true enquiries, which may follow phatic enquiries, are really attempts to discover specifics about aspects of the well-being of the greeted. Because enquiries from L to H are generally deemed unacceptable, they are expected to be made only where very necessary, when there is perhaps the need to risk being sanctioned, and this situation is when the H is known or seen to have undergone some health and financial or other such challenges. In such uses of the enquiry then the L depicts a lot of care and solidarity, which is also reinforced by the use of the honorific addressives which help to depict the honour the greeter (the L) has for the greeted (the H). A number of such true enquiries from L to H were collected in this research:

*Daddy, How's it today?*

*Papa, I hope its better now/I hope you are doing well.*

*Old lady, how's the asthma today?*

The use of specific temporal designation as in 'today' and 'now' and the references to the specifics of well-being as in 'the asthma' helps to differentiate these true enquiries from phatic ones.

One other kind of greetings which is seen as a result of nativisation is 'How do you do? In SE, it realises originally as a greeting, which characteristically takes a repetition for its response, in line with 'Good morning' and others. In Ghana, however, it is realised as an enquiry and this reflects in the intonation of the greeting as well as in the response it usually elicits. In SE, the nucleus is on 'do' in a rising intonation:

As realised in Ghanaian English, tune one, which is a falling intonation generally used for wh- questions is used. Again the nucleus is on 'you' as though in the question. In its realisation in Ghanaian English greetings, the kinetic stresses are on 'How' – since it is considered as a Wh- interrogative – and also on 'you' and 'do'. This is in reflection of the intonational patterns of Ghanaian English in which the Wh- element, the Subject (where it is not the Wh- element, the main verb and its complementation are stressed. In addition is the fact that the pronoun 'you' and the auxiliary 'do' which would be realised in their weak forms in SE have their full forms. Koranteng (1992: 73-8) observes similar situation in the realisation of unstressed words and the identification of the nucleus in Ghanaian English. It is evident that intonation and other suprasegmental features are a very crucial way of the nativisation of spoken English as observed by Sey (1973: 143):

Deviant usage in Educated Ghanaian English pronunciation is more marked in sentence stress patterns and intonation than in the pronunciation of individual words.

Another aspect of the nativisation of this greeting is the response it elicits, and this also emphasises its informality: These responses comprise such forms as are used for the other enquiries such as 'Fine', 'I'm doing fine'. The following Ghanaian-oriented responses are also used:

- ✓ So-so
- ✓ We can't complain
- ✓ Small-small
- ✓ Not bad/not so bad
- ✓ We dey
- ✓ How for do?
- ✓ It's Cool/Cool/Cool Now

Whereas 'Fine' is clearly a diminutive form of the SE and the formal form, the others can be seen as reflections of the responses of enquiries in the various first languages and the political and socio-economic challenges of the people. "So-so" is a Ghanaian Pidgin word meaning 'just acceptable or just enough'. It is used in situations of compromise like 'We can't complain'. Thus, in addition to its pidgin origin, it reflects the hard, bizarre socio-economic conditions. It in this sense means much like



'not so bad' though the latter appears more hopeful. "Small-small" as a response to enquiries is a translation of a form of response which exists in many of the traditional linguistic cultures.

It is evident from the discussions just above that the responses of the English enquiry-greetings in the Ghanaian society is sometimes organised not as a formulaic response but as description of the conditions surrounding the interaction. Further, it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that whereas 'Small-small' could be seen as a translation of the traditional enquiry response 'nkakra-nkakra' (Akan), 'Nkadankadan' (Hausa) the rest 'So-so', 'We can't complain', and 'Not bad/not so bad' are not related to traditional enquiry responses. Traditional enquiry responses are generally formulaic, and they usually express the gratitude of God and the hope for betterment of situations. Evidently therefore, the gravest form of response among the Akans, for instance, is 'nkakra-nkakra', or 'oye/oyeara' which also expresses hope for, and even the inception of improvement.

Contrasting 'Small-small' ('nkakra-nkakra'), however, are 'We can't complain', and 'Not bad/not so bad' which in varying degrees draw attention to the despair and frustration of life. This change in the focus of enquiry responses from the hope and gratitude of the traditional ones (as well as 'Small-small') and the despair and frustration of 'We can't complain', and 'Not bad/not so bad' leads us to hypothesize that 'We can't complain', and 'Not bad/not so bad' may have emerged in response to a situation of life which was rarely known in the traditional setting, and which therefore called for a drastic change in the focus of responses to enquiries. Aged informants explain that associated with their movement into the urban centres was a drastic disengagement from the hope, assurance and belongingness associated with the traditional communities. In these communities, food was generally abundant. In many homes, surplus food was thrown away after most meals. Additionally, the sense of belonging and the communal spirit of the extended family system gave one a great deal of assurance even in the most traumatic of circumstances. In the urban centres, this high sense of belonging and assurance was drastically challenged and individuals often came face to face alone with the vicissitudes of life. Food was no longer so abundant; and in addition to this, the growing taste of the migrants for the expensive Western things and the increasing request for financial support from relations back at home exacerbated the challenges of migrant urban life. It is in this context that the English forms 'We can't complain', and 'Not bad/not so bad' arose as people's expression of their circumstances which were so different from the easy, assuring traditional ones.

## Other Greetings

In the Ghanaian sociolinguistic context are other English greetings and responses, which are of basically Ghanaian origin and are therefore not considered as corruptions or reinterpretations of SE forms. Below is a catalogue of such greetings.

REETING	RESPONSE
Yessa	Yessa/Yessa, Sir /Yessa, Massa
Correct	Correct Sir/ No mistake
Hello	Hi
I salute (Sir)	I salute/I surrender, Sir/I catch it
Hi	Hi
What's Up?	What's Up?
How be?	Cool things

These greetings are used generally in the colloquial context and between peers whether of age or achievement. Sometimes, however, they are used from H to L to depict informality. Of these, the one that has remained phonologically SE is 'Hello: Hi'. It is also seen as the most recent and is believed to be a borrowing from current usage in Britain and especially, the United States. The others have in various ways been phonologically nativised in consonance with the phonological and phonotactic properties which are generally common to languages in Ghana. Most notable among them is 'Yes Sir' which is realised as 'Yessa' /jɛsa/ even among very educated speakers of English who can be said to have achieved a near-native competence in English. It is considered as a formulaic structure in the sense that it is not seen really as depicting the meanings of the two component words of 'Yes' and 'Sir'. This is explained in the sense that the structure is not organised as an affirmation of a question for which

'Yes' would be required. Further, it is not used with the idea of showing deference as exhibited in the SE use of 'Sir'. In this sense then, 'Yessa' can be said to be semantically opaque because its meaning is not discernible from the meaning of its component words. Contrary to depicting deference, it shows equality, informality and excitement.

In the Ghanaian situation, then, one can observe a remarkable difference between 'Sir' as an addressive in greetings and 'Sir' (written as 'Sa') as part of greeting response, and this also draws some more attention to the meaning of 'Sir' in greeting responses. In the greeting, 'Sir' is, according to custom, added to the main greeting stem such as 'Good morning', 'Fine Morning', and 'Correct'. 'Sir' in the greeting itself generally carries the SE meaning as a polite address term for male adults, usually for people who are not very familiar or who demand some level of politeness or deference by virtue of their social, political or professional or vocational roles. As part of the response, however, 'Sir' (Sa) is divested of all these semantic properties with the exception of the idea + *male*. It does not carry the idea of deference associated with the SE form which is reflected in the greeting. 'Sir' in the response is, thus, used for all males, and even sometimes for female greeters in familiar contexts as in 'Yessa Madam'. The contrast between this pervasive, non-politeness use of 'sir' and the normal SE use is that not all those for whom the non-politeness, response form is used would generally be referred to as 'Sir' in the greeting itself. For example, though an adolescent may receive 'Yessa' in response, it is very unlikely that he would be greeted 'Good morning, Sir' even by people younger than him. Even in the secondary schools, up to the 80's where seniority was so seriously encouraged, juniors would not greet their seniors 'Good afternoon, Sir'. They would rather use 'Senior' in place of 'Sir'.

'Yessa' as a response form can also be seen as a formulaic, idiomatic form; and, thus, the meanings of 'Yes' and 'Sir' do not really contribute to the meaning of 'Yessa'. It is partly in furtherance of this opacity that the identities of the two words have somehow been effaced with the otherwise two words now coalesced and the spelling of 'sir' changed.

The SE meaning of 'Sir' as a polite male address form has already been discussed above. None of these is reflected in 'Yessa' as a greeting response. In its Ghanaian use then, 'Yessa' can be equated to response acknowledgements in the various languages such as 'Yaa' as in 'Yaa Egya' (Akan – I respond, fatherly one), 'Naa' (Dagbani) to which addressives may be added. It can therefore be interpreted as 'I acknowledge it'. Thus, one often hears such responses involving 'Yessa' as

- ✓ Yessa, Sir
- ✓ Yessa, Senior
- ✓ Yessa, Boss
- ✓ Yessa, Master
- ✓ Yessa, Madam.
- ✓ Yessa, Kwasi.

The addition of addressives to Yessa responses points to the fact that the SE meaning of 'Sir' is not acknowledged in the interpretation of the 'Yessa'.

The use of the evaluative responses such as 'Correct', 'No mistake', 'Fine' and 'Thank you' reflects the attention of Ghanaians to the importance of greetings in the body politic and the need to commend people who uphold this sociolinguistic principle. The following was gathered through the study to explain the adoption of these forms of greeting responses. The account established that modernisation with its attendant migration into the urban centres or to places other than people's hometowns made the otherwise ethnic societies rather cosmopolitan, with people from different ethnic backgrounds. This meant that differing from what occurred in the villages, people were no longer bound by the strong cohesion of ethnicity and sustained coexistence between families. At the urban centres, individuals may not have known one another before, and may not be working or staying in the same close community. This situation was exacerbated by the feeling that one moved to the urban centres basically for wealth. The result was that people grew individualistic, and were often suspicious of one another except they were bound by some close ties.

Such state of affairs affected greetings which in the ethnic communities was considered an important cohesive element. It became common for two people living in the same vicinity or working at the same place to pass without any greetings. What was most serious was the fact that children or younger

ones would refuse to greet adults or older ones – a situation which was very reprehensible in the traditional, ethnic communities. According to our informants this drew sharp reactions from usually the male adults in the communities, who would sometimes scold especially the young ones for not extending greetings in accordance with known traditional practice. Side-by-side this scold was also commendation for those who extended greetings as expected, and 'Fine', 'Good', 'Correct' and later 'No mistake' emerged, thus, as *commendational responses*. The research established that 'good' and 'fine' were the original commendational forms to which 'correct' and 'no mistake' were added by the youthful populations.

Over the years, however, 'Correct', 'No Mistake' and 'Thank you' seem to be losing their meaning of evaluating or showing commendations for greetings. As gathered from most of the youth, they use these responses without the idea of commending those who greet them. Thus, they have become largely formulaic forms whose main effect is in the expression of equality and solidarity. Among the youth and young adults, the greeting 'All Correct' with the response 'No mistake' is also widespread as a formulaic phatic expression of intimacy or familiarity. Associated with its formulaic use is perhaps the corruption of the pronunciation of 'Correct' with the elision of the [k] in the /kt/ coda consonantal cluster and the realisation of the initial vowel as the back [ɔ] instead of the central [ə]. According to informants, they would find it quite odd, if one responded 'Correct' with the RP pronunciation /kɪrɛkt/ instead of the corrupted /kɔrɛt/. To them, they would find it difficult to recognise the RP form as a greeting response. Thus, even the highly educated informants, who would normally speak English with a close RP approximation and would pronounce 'correct' normally very close to the RP /kɪrɛkt/, would realise it as /kɔrɛt/ as a greeting response.

Though the use of such commendational responses does not reflect approval for those who contribute to reversal of trend of the relegation of greetings as a cohesive element, they continue to be used generally by post-adolescents and adults, rather than by children and adolescents. 92% of such responses encountered were by post-adolescents and adults.

It is in the same context as described above that 'Thank you' with its corrupted forms 'Tankiu' /tankjiu/ and 'Tankyem' /tantɛm/ and the more recent 'Thanks' as responses to greetings emerged. As 'fine', 'good', 'correct' and 'no mistake' were used to commend people who upheld the traditional expectations of greetings in establishing social cohesion, 'Thank you' with all its variations was used to express the appreciation of the greeted. In most Ghanaian communities refusal to greet (especially from **H** to **L**) is deemed as a show of disregard, which was most painful in the emerging cosmopolitan societies because unlike in the traditional or ethnic communities, one had a number of ways of registering his disapproval and in having the young one reprimanded if he failed to greet. In this context, greetings were sometimes seen as an acknowledgement of the age, seniority or equality which the greeted did not want to lose; and the greeted, in the light of the above, responded to greetings showing his gratitude for the restoration or acknowledgement of this respect.

The corrupt realisation of 'Thank you' as 'Tankiu' /tankjiu/ and 'Tankyem' /tantɛm/ draws attention to the education and social standing of the population among whom the responses emerged and found currency. In 'Tankiu' /tankjiu/, for instance, the [θ] of 'thank' /θaŋk/ is replaced with [t] as customary with speakers of English at the incipient stage. (Ref. Sey, 1973). Added with this also is the enhancement of the palatalisation resulting in the epenthesis - the addition of the vowel /i/ between /j/ and /u/. /tantɛm/ depicts a most drastic phonological change in which in addition to the replacement of the dental fricative /θ/ with the dental plosive /t/, the voiceless velar plosive /k/ is assimilated as /t/; and it can be argued that the corruption of 'Thank you' as 'Tankyem' /tantɛm/ started only about half a century ago. Adding weight to this hypothesis, some old informants confirmed that 'Tankyem' /tantɛm/ was generally heard in the 1960s to the 1970s usually from men who were quite advanced in age even then. Throughout this study no use of 'Tankyem' was recorded except for intended humorous effect. These corruptions lead one to hypothesise also that the population within which the corrupted forms of 'Thank you' emerged may not have been formally educated in the English language, making it difficult for them to realise the dental fricative /θ/, which is absent in the Ghanaian languages.

## Conclusion

We have observed in the study that SE general greetings have undergone several structural, lexical, phonological and sociolinguistic variations in the Ghanaian culture. These changes are influenced by the greetings of the traditional setting as well as general sociolinguistic conditions within which the

English general greetings are set. The occurrence of these changes is also determined by the formality of the context of greetings. On the other hand, however, the level of education of the interactants does not seem to affect the manifestation of the changes. Thus, changes to English general greetings such as the loss or replacement of phonological elements and the introduction of new greeting formulae are widespread among both educated and uneducated Ghanaians, though some of the phonological changes especially may have started from non-educated users of English greetings. It is such widespread nature of the changes which makes us confirm that the changes English general greetings have undergone in the Ghanaian context are part of the general process of nativisation or indigenisation which English is undergoing in the second language situation in Ghana.

## References

- Achebe, C. 1972. 'The African Writer and the English Language'. In *Morning yet on Creation Day*. London and Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Adetugbo, A., 1991. 'Diversity and Change in the English Language: British, Nigerian and American English.' *GEGE* 1 pp 1-12.
- Adjaye, S.A. 1987. *The Pronunciation of English in Ghana with Specific Reference to Speakers of Akan, Ewe and Ga*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. University of London.
- Afolayan, A., 1987, 'English as a Second Language: A Variety or a Myth'. *Journal of English as a Second Language*, 7: 4-16.
- Ahulu, S., 1992, *English in Ghana*. Unpublished Ph.D Diss., Cambridge University.
- ..... 1994, 'How Ghanaian is Ghanaian English'. *English Today* 38 (10) 25-29.
- ..... 1995. 'Hybridised English in Ghana'. *English Today* 41: 31-36.
- ..... 1996. 'Just How innovative are the new Englishes? *English Today* 46: 32-34.
- ..... 1997. 'General English'. *English Today* 49: 17-23
- Akere, F. 1982, 'Sociocultural Constraints and Emergence of a Standard Nigerian English.' In J. B. Pride (ed) *New Englishes*. Rowley, Penn.: Newbury House.
- Akindele, D.F. 1997. 'A sociolinguistic analysis of Yoruba greetings'. *Journal of African Languages and Cultures*. 3 (1) pp. 98-113.
- Ameka, F. K. 1991. Ewe: Its grammatical constructions and illocutionary devices. PhD Thesis. Australian National University, Canberra.
- Awonusi, V. O. 1990. 'Whose Standard, Which Model? Towards the definition of Standard Spoken English for Teaching, Learning and Testing in Nigerian Schools'. *Journal of the Nigerian English Studies Association*. Vol 10. No 1. pp 71-83.
- ..... 1994. 'The Syllable as an Extra Problem' *Lagos Review of English Studies*. Pp 144-175.
- Bailey, R.W., 1973, *Varieties of Present Day English*. New York: Macmillan.
- Bamgbose, A., 1992, 'Standard Nigerian English: Issues of Identification'. In Braj Kachru (ed) *Models for Non-Native Englishes*.
- ..... 1995, 'English in the Nigerian Environment'. In Banjo et al (eds) *New Englishes: A West African Perspective*. Ibadan: Mosuro.
- Bobda, A.S. 1994. *Aspects of Cameroon English Phonology*. Berne: Peter Lang.
- Bokamba, E. G. 1993. 'The Africanisation of English' In Kachru, B. B. *The Other Tongue*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Bowen, J. D., H. Madsen & A. Helferty, 1985. *TESOL Techniques and Procedures*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House
- Dadzie, A.B.K. 1986. 'A variety of English as a second language: Problems of standardisation' *Lagos Review of English Studies* VIII 74-93.



- Dako, K. 2001. 'Ghanaianisms – Towards a Semantic Formal Classification'. *English Worldwide* 22. 23-53.
- Dakubu, M. E. Kropp, 1981. *One Voice: The Linguistic Culture of an Accra Lineage*. Leiden: African Studies Centre.
- Dzameshie, A. K., 2002. 'The Forms, Functions and social value of greetings among the Ewes. In Ameka, F. K. and Osam, E. K. (eds) *New Directions in Ghanaian Linguistics*. Accra: Black Mask.
- Ebsworth, M, E., J. W. Bodman and M. Carpenter, 1996 'Cross-Cultural realization of greetings in American English.' In S. M. Gass and J. Neu, (eds). *Speech acts across cultures: Challenges to communication in a second language*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter. Pp. 89-107.
- Egblewogbe, E. Y. 1990. 'Social and Psychological Aspects of Greetings among the Ewes of West Africa.' *Research Review* NS. 6.2: 8-18.
- Emery, P. G. 2000. 'Greeting, Congratulating and Commiserating in Omani Arabic Language', *Culture and Curriculum*. 13(2) 196-217.
- Fadipe, N. A. 1970. *The Sociology of Yoruba*, Ibadan, University Press Ltd
- Firth, J. R., 1972. 'Verbal and bodily Rituals of greeting and parting.' In La Fontaine, J. Sê (ed) *Interpretation of Ritual*. London: Tavistock, pp 1-38.
- Gyasi, I.K. 1990. 'The State of English in Ghana' *English Today* 23. 24-26.
- ..... 1991. 'Aspects of English in Ghana'. *English Today* 26. 26-31.
- Gyening, J. A., 1997, *Indigenisation of English in the Ghanaian Fictional Text: A Stylistic Study of Ama Ata Aidoo's No Sweetness Here*. M. Phil Diss., Dept of English, Univ. of Ghana.
- Ibrahim, A. G. Y., A. D. Grimshaw, C. S. Bird 1976. Greetings in the Desert. *American Ethnologist* 3. Pp 797-824.
- Irvine, J.T. 1974. 'Strategies of Status manipulation in Wolof Greeting'. In R. Bauman & J. Sherzer (eds) *Ethnography of Speaking*. Pp 167-191. Cambridge, University press.
- Kasper, Gabriele, 1989. *Interactive procedures in interlanguage discourse*. In Wieslaw Oleksy, ed., *Contrastive Pragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Koranteng, L. A. 2006. *Ghanaian English: A Description of its Sounds System and Phonological Features*. PhD Dissertation, University of Ghana, Legon
- Koranteng, L. A. 1992 *The use of Non-segmental Features in Ghanaian English*. Unpublished M.A (ESL) diss. Dept of Linguistics, University of Ghana, Legon.
- Laver, J. 1981. Linguistic Routines and Politeness in Greeting and Parting. In F. Coulmas (ed) *Conversational Routines*. The Hague: Mouton
- Malinowski, B. 1972. 'Phatic Communion'. In Laver, J and S. Hutchson (eds) *Communication in face to Face Interaction*. Marmondsworth: Penguin.
- Nketia, J. H., 1958, 'Folklore in Ghana'. *The Ghanaian*. No. 1
- Owusu-Ansah, L. K., 1994. 'Is there a Ghanaian English? Evidence from the Study of Contextual Variation'. Unpublished manuscript.
- ..... 1997. 'Nativisation and the Maintenance of Standards in Non-Native Varieties of English.' In M.E. Dakubu (ed) *English in Ghana*, pp 23-33
- Quirk, R. 1990, 'Language Varieties and Standard Language.' *English Today* 21. 3 -21.
- Sey, K. 1973, *Ghanaian English*. London: Longman.
- Searle, J. 1969, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Sekyi-Baidoo, Y. 2006. 'General Greetings in the Context of Akan Interpersonal Interaction'. Unpublished Essay.
- ..... 2005 *Learning and Communication*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.



Strevens, P.D. 1983. 'The Localised Forms of English' In Kachru, B. B. (ed) *The other Tongue*. Oxford, Peganon.

Ventola, E. 1979. 'The Structure of Casual Conversation in English.' *Journal of pragmatics* 3, 267-298.

Wardhaugh, R. 1992, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York: Blackwell.

Wilkins, D. A. 1976. *Notional syllabuses*. Oxford: Oxford University

Yankah, K. 1995. *Speaking for the Chief: Okyeame and the Politics of Akan Royal Oratory*: Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.