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Individual Lives in Collectivist Faces: On Social Norms in a Radio Show

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1. Introduction

Postcolonial African communities have been shown to have collectivist cultural frames (cf., Lienhardt 1985; Nwoye 1992; de Kadt 1998; Egner 2006; Anchimbe 2018). Social interaction norms of these societies oblige speakers to communicate in ways that portray them as deserving and acceptable members of their societies. While research has illustrated the functioning of these collectivist societies, Lienhardt (1985: 145) warns, truly so, that we should not place “too much one-sided stress on the collectivist orientation of African ideas of the person” to a point where it “deflect[s] interest from this [individual] African concern, also, on occasion, with individuals as individuals” (Lienhardt 1985: 143). A number of studies have shown that interlocutors in or from these societies often prefer to project collectivist or group faces even where the individual face would suffice, for instance, in requesting, criticizing and thanking (e.g., Nwoye 1992), in offering (e.g., Anchimbe 2018), in insulting others (e.g., Mulo Farenkia 2011), in instructing (Grainger et al. 2010), and in constructing identities (Ige 2010) among others.

This chapter illustrates how individual life experiences and faces are often submerged or subsumed into collectivist group faces during interactions in postcolonial African communities. This happens in interactions that take place in private as well as in public space. Focus in this chapter is on the radio show, “Happy Birthday,” broadcast in Bamenda, Cameroon, a postcolonial collectivist context where a postcolonial English variety, Cameroon English (cf., Simo Bobda 1994; Anchimbe 2006; Kouega 2007; etc.), is used. I also demonstrate that, although English is a nativized language in this society, it is still capable of communicating the collectivist intentions speakers encode during interactions. Given that the pragmatics of Postcolonial Englishes has been slow in emerging, this chapter seeks to draw more attention to it, and to signal the need for emic multilingual approaches for studying Postcolonial Englishes.

Although the radio broadcasts take place in the public sphere, when the need to project collectivist group values and defend group social norms arises, interlocutors quickly adopt positions and construct discourses that enable them to do so. For instance, they would easily and quickly attribute and accept blame and criticism, give and receive advice on personal or private issues, and adopt and perform kinship asymmetrical roles

for respect, social cohesion, etc. The adoption of kinship asymmetrical roles, social affective roles and tasks, and advice-giving roles is generally based on the interlocutor's age, social status, social hierarchy and sometimes gender. Allegiance to the group, its culture and norms is so strong that members are ready to perform private dialogue, give and take family-like advice, and enact respect behavior in the public space in ways reminiscent of the intimacy of the home. They do so in order to maintain their group face and in accordance with the social norms of their societies.

Pragmatic research on Postcolonial Englishes is not only limited but also marked by reliance on Western approaches, especially Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989a, b) cross-cultural approach, Goffman's (1967) face concept, and Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1979) speech act theories. In this group belong Lwanga-Lumu (1999) on requests in Uganda, Mustapha (2011) on compliment responses in Nigerian English, Ouafu (2006) on pragmatic particles in Cameroon English, Anderson (2006, 2009) on requests in Ghanaian English, etc.

Yamuna Kachru (1991a, b) was among the first to consciously raise the lack of research attention on the pragmatics of New Englishes, as they were called then. Nelson (1991) on speech acts in New Englishes creative writings and Tinkham (1991) on the social variation in the use of speech acts in India, both included in Kachru's (1991a) edited volume, have as overall aim to illustrate the variation in pragmatic phenomena in New Englishes contexts. Kachru (1991a) proposes an integrated framework for research on speech acts in indigenized varieties of English. Her cry that "the speech act theory is not sufficient for research on cross-cultural interactions" (Kachru 1991b: 299) in postcolonial contexts was echoed in the 1990s by Nwoye (1992) and de Kadt (1998). In the 2000s, a few more studies pointed out the insufficiency of Western theories to postcolonial English discourses, among them, Kasanga (2003, 2006), Anchimbe (2008), and Mulo Farenkia (2010). Others have recently proposed more concise frameworks for analyzing non-Western discourses, e.g., emancipatory pragmatics (Hanks et al. 2009) and postcolonial pragmatics (cf., Janney 2009; Anchimbe and Janney 2011a/b, 2017; Anchimbe 2016, 2018). Postcolonial pragmatics approaches postcolonial discourses from the standpoint of their locatedness, historically, socially and geographically, in the lives of multilingual speakers and their collectivist postcolonial societies. I have used it in this chapter since it is built on the complex societal structure of postcolonial societies.

In line with that, the rest of the chapter is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the data used in the analysis and Section 3 explains the applicability of postcolonial pragmatics to collectivist cultures like the Cameroonian while Section 4 examines how individual lives and faces are understood in terms of the society's group face and social norms. The conclusion accentuates the importance of understanding the basic multilingual, multicultural and multiethnic structure of collectivist postcolonial societies in research endeavors about them.

2. The Data: *Happy Birthday* Program

The data used in this study are culled from two editions of the program "Happy Birthday"¹ broadcast on the Bamenda station of the Cameroon Radio and Television

(CRTV) network in November-December 2007. Two interviews were selected from the two editions because they contain many of the issues analyzed in this chapter. In almost all of the interviews, there is at least one instance of collectivist group priorities overriding the individual's face or privacy.

In this Saturday morning prime time broadcast, the host visits the maternity sections of hospitals in the city and wishes happy motherhood and happy birthday to mothers and babies respectively. In the exchanges with the mothers, which last on average two minutes, the host asks the mothers their names, age, marital status, education, the number of children they have or wish to have, their husbands and the delivery experience. She then offers them the chance to inform friends and/or family about the delivery of the child. The program lasts thirty minutes and is generally pre-taped although a few broadcasts are live.

The host switches between three languages during the broadcast, i.e., English, Cameroon Pidgin English and French. The major reasons for the switches are the linguistic needs of the interviewee (i.e., switching to the language she understands) and the additional social role the host wants to play (e.g., switching to Pidgin often happens to create a family atmosphere conducive for reprimanding a young mother for giving birth out of wedlock and while still in school). Such reprimands are done on radio just as they would normally be done in a home setting (see Anchimbe and Janney 2011a). Sometimes the host also asks mothers to pass on messages to loved ones or sing birth celebratory songs in their native languages. It is, therefore, a multilingual program in which choice of language is highly significant and representative of the composition of the society. That is not the focus of this chapter though. The episodes selected for analysis here are in Cameroon English (see Appendix).

3. Collective Face, Cultures and Postcolonial Pragmatics

One of the major aims of the postcolonial pragmatics framework is to account for the impact of the collectivist, multicultural, multilingual and multiethnic nature of postcolonial societies on social interaction. These aspects have generally been overlooked in most previous research that relies on Western monocultural and monolingual frameworks. In the Western-based studies, overarching attention is paid to the atomistic needs of the individual and his or her face wants. Taking this position as universal, the collectivist and group-based faces of most African cultures have often been misrepresented. In these cultures, Kasanga (2011: 45) signals, an individual's "loss of face through a shameful act [not just in speech] is akin to letting others down more than oneself down." So, there are other forces at work beyond individual volition that compel group members to show allegiance to the group; defend and protect its social esteem vis-a-vis other groups. Some of these have been addressed by Nwoye (1992), de Kadt (1994, 1998), Kasanga (2006), and Anchimbe (2008), among others.

The complex nature of the collectivist society's expectations, members' expectations of each other through, for instance, the onlooker response (see Anchimbe 2011, 2018), as well as respect for the society's social norms must be incorporated into any analysis that aims to appropriately explain the communicative choices in these societies. Earlier

studies about pragmatic phenomena in African societies have accentuated the importance of this complex web of interconnectedness. For instance, Nwoye (1992: 317) narrates a personal experience in which he asked for help from a man and his son, both strangers to him, with pushing his car that had suddenly broken down. Without using any hedges or politeness markers, his request for assistance was immediately met with prompt action. For the father and son who helped him, what mattered was not the way they were addressed but rather the public self-esteem of their group, i.e., the village in which the car had broken down. They knew if they did not help—help being a default social expectation of their society—the stranger would think badly of their village and may recount his negative experience to others hence leading to a negative appraisal of their group. Postcolonial pragmatics looks beyond the verbalized discourse into non-verbalized sociocultural norms and expectations in its approach to postcolonial social interactions.

The strong collectivist impetus of these societies is not only implied in behavior patterns and choices in speech, but are often also clearly verbalized. This could be through positive judgements of their society and culture or identity alignments with it. In a study of collective identity construction by students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Ige (2010) finds out that male Zulu students, who refer to themselves as *Zulu-bradas* (brothers—in plural, meaning ‘group’), portray themselves “in ways that would maintain and reinforce their cultural identity, generally as members of a group” (Ige 2010: 3050). As students living in a multicultural and multilingual context, i.e., the city, where group boundaries are blurred by the presence of people from many other ethnic and linguistic groups, the question arises of how this group cultural identity influences their self-image as individuals? To this, Ige (2010: 3050) illustrates that, among the *Zulu-bradas*, the “collective identity tends to supersede their individual identity and may result in suppression of the individual self.” However, this individual self also exists (cf., Lienhardt 1985) but is often the marked counterpart of the group self (Kasanga 2006, 2011) which is generally unmarked or is the default.

The reason why projecting the collectivist self is considered default behavior is because people grow up in such an environment and socialize into it. Like language, the norms of a society are acquired in childhood and consolidated as one grows up in the society. On a personal note, Kasanga (2011: 47–8), taking his collectivist culture as point of reference, explains how sharing or generosity is a default social norm:

In my own culture, I learnt quite early that almost anything could be shared with siblings, relatives, neighbours, and even passers-by out of norm-based generosity. A gift received called for a favour in return either to the same benefactor or, through circular generosity, to a third party.

Kasanga 2011: 47–8

The cultural expectation of circular generosity mentioned above seems to have coalesced in postcolonial societies with the Christian canons of kindness and generosity. There is potentially a blend of pre-colonial cultural expectations, as signalled by Kasanga (2011) and Christianity expectations, as can be seen in the excerpt below from Anchimbe (2018: 264). In an interview about the refusal of offers, a 25-30

year-old female Cameroonian was asked if she was disappointed when her offer was refused by a friend of hers:

I was not disappointed. I was not surprised, but I told her, I said “you are refusing me blessings” because when you give something to somebody, the heavens bless you. So, I told her “you have refused me receiving my blessings from above.”

Anchimbe 2018: 264

Even though circular generosity seems to be replaced here by “blessings from above,” the underlying meaning remains the same. The only difference is the register. God uses other humans to bless people, the respondent added later in the interview. The default behavior of generosity binds Christians in this example at two collectivist or group levels: they are members of the society (clan, village, etc.) and the church. Postcolonial pragmatics treats religion as a central analytical component since it affects the lives and discourses of people in postcolonial societies.

The exemplification of the functioning of the collectivist face and culture in postcolonial societies above lays the foundation for the analysis in this study. Having shown how the individual self is submerged into the collective self, I then applied a postcolonial pragmatics perspective to the data, illustrating that individual face, even in the public space of the radio and in an indigenized ex-colonial language, is submerged in the group face when the need for that arises. Utterances, which in Western pragmatics theories would be considered utterly face threatening, are not at all face threats in this context in as much as they serve to preserve the group's face.

4. Individual Lives in Collectivist Faces

Although the interactions in the excerpts below are in Cameroon English, some of the cultural facets embedded in them stem from indigenous social norms that have coalesced with colonially-introduced norms, or have hybridized with them into a new complex system of social interaction. What stands out as the underlying societal construct in the excerpts is the collectivist basis that permeates speakers' intentions and speech. Both the verbal and non-verbal elements of the interactions indicate, implicitly and explicitly, that members want to defend the collectivist group by playing the roles expected of them or by fitting themselves into the appropriate social stratum. Social stratification in this case is at the level of age, social status, kinship and gender.

A significant dimension of the collectivist base in the interactions is the fact that members of the society consider themselves as being related almost on a kinship level. This relationship can be captured using the conceptual metaphor *COMMUNITY IS FAMILY*. As illustrated below, this is not only limited to the use of kinship terms for non-kin interlocutors. It extends to social commitments, kinship-like tasks, etc. which members perform for each other. In performing these commitments and tasks, the individual (both their face and status) is only relevant in as much as s/he can relate and fit into the larger societal structure, governed by postcolonial pragmatic components like age, social status, gender, religion, history, sociocultural norms of respect,

generosity, deference, alignment, etc. These components usually play dominant roles in interpersonal communication irrespective of the context in which the interaction takes place.

Members of the society feel obliged to perform any of these group-based social roles whenever the situation warrants it. For instance, the host of the “Happy Birthday” program flouts her duty as journalist by adopting the position of a mother or aunt to reproach a young girl for getting pregnant while still in school and while she is not yet married (see excerpt 3). Accepting this shift to family space on radio, the young mother apologizes for her mistake, accepts the consequences and issues advice to other girls like her who may make the same mistake.

So, clearly individual faces or statuses cease to matter when the expectations of the COMMUNITY IS FAMILY understanding are not met. In the analysis below, five ways are identified in which this happens in the data. First, the underlying need to live up to social norms and expectations is identified (4.1). Second, the obligation members have to reproach those who do not live up to these expectations is shown (4.2). Third, the duty members have to advise those who flout social norms is described (4.3). Fourth, the rationale members have for informing others of their respect for social norms in a bid to claim societal recognition is explained (4.4). Fifth, the importance of respect behavior in these asymmetrical interactions is expounded on (4.5).

4.1 Living up to Social Expectations

Every society has expectations of how members should behave both verbally and physically or non-verbally. What makes collectivist societies different is the extent to which these expectations or norms often supersede members’ individualism and how they are enforced. Often unwritten and acquired in childhood, social norms and expectations in these societies are enforced by members’ reliance on a collective repertoire they all share and protect. Aware of these norms, they serve as checks and judges of each other’s behavior in their different capacities, i.e., in accordance with societal roles attached to age, parenting, gender, social status, etc.

In the research literature, three concepts have been proposed to explain this. Kasanga (2011) uses the notion of circular generosity to justify why people in the collectivist context of The Congo generously give to others. They know that when they give, others would also give to them. Anchimbe (2011, 2018) introduces the concept of the onlooker response to underscore how the impact of onlookers in a communicative situation forces interlocutors to abide by social norms for fear of being accused of letting down the group’s values. At the level of speech, the concept of attitudinal filtration (Anchimbe 2006, 2014), illustrates how members, through their negative attitudes, force other speakers to abandon foreign speech forms and to use only speech forms from the community or the language variety they speak. Using their community’s speech forms helps them keep their linguistic identity and belonging to the community.

One of the social norms or expectations recurrent in the radio program is that women are expected to get married before having kids. Where this is not the case, any member of the society old enough to be a parent would normally feel called upon by social duty to reproach and then advise the young mother. As excerpts 1 and 2 below

show, asking about the age and marital status of the mothers is a common thing on the program. Without hesitations or objections to this apparent prying into their private space or life, the mothers answer the questions. The answers to these two questions set the tone for the rest of the interaction. If the mother is married, the conversation continues in a relaxed and supportive manner (excerpt 2)—proof that the mother has lived up to the expectations of the society. But if the mother is not married, she is reproached, chastised, reprimanded, advised and corrected (excerpt 1)—proof that she has not lived up to the expectations.

Excerpt 1. M.E. 23-year old, unmarried, student (22–12–2007)

Host: Good morning.

Lady: Good morning Madam. I am called M.E.

Host: How old are you?

Lady: 23 years.

Host: Is this your first delivery?

Lady: Yes.

Host: Are you married?

Lady: No.

Host: (Pause) Are you in school?

Lady: Yes

...

Host: And how comes? You know it is not easy to start breeding children when you are going to school, not so?

Lady: Yes.

The two interlocutors in excerpt 1 above are bound by the social norms and expectations of their society. The host observes a brief pause after the answer to the question about marriage is negative. This gives her the time to switch from the role of a radio host to that of a mother. The mother role grants her the social responsibility to reproach and advice the young mother. On her part, the young unmarried mother continues to be cooperative, sharing even more information about herself when she knows implicitly that she would be reproached. She accepts the reproach respectfully since it comes from an older member of the society with a mother-like or aunt-like status.

In excerpt 2, when the marriage question is answered positively, the host does not pause. She continues with questions related to building a family, i.e., the number of children she has, their sexes, and whether the young mother is happy with two daughters. The question about having only daughters is an implicit reference to the strong patriarchal hereditary culture of the society where only male children have inheritance rights. In excerpt 2, the host does not need to switch roles because the society's expectation for having kids has been met. She joins the mother in celebrating the birth of the child in a normal and smooth manner.

Excerpt 2. A.E. 23-year old, married, teacher-trainee (17–11–2007)

Host: Good morning Madam.

Lady: Good morning Aunt

- Host: What is your name?
Lady: My name is A.E.
Host: How old are you?
Lady: 23 years old.
Host: Are you married?
Lady: Yes
Host: Is this your first delivery?
Lady: No. Second.
Host: Was the first a baby girl too?
Lady: Yes.
Host: So you have two daughters.
Lady: Yes, I do.
Host: Are you happy?
Lady: Very very happy.

The two young mothers in excerpts 1 and 2, both 23 years old, receive starkly different treatments from the host only because of their marital status at the time they give birth. Even though the interactions take place on radio, a public utility, and the young mothers are not anonymous since they introduce themselves by their real names, they discuss their private lives as though they were in their homes. With the information they provide, listeners could easily trace them and identify them. They may, thereafter, also be exposed to more reproach from their neighbors, extended family, or the rest of the community. Sharing the information on radio and accepting potential consequences is proof of the power of social norms and members' respect for them. Neither the host nor the mothers lose (individual) face because they have played the roles expected of them by society. The host asks the questions so as to determine her next action while the mothers answer honestly so as not to lose their place as honest members of the society—even if this earns them reproach as in excerpt 3.

4.2 Reproaching for Breaking Social Norms

It is normal for members of any society to be reproached, reprimanded, corrected and even punished when they violate norms of their society. In some societies, members are summoned to family or community judicial or customary circles where the reproach or punishment is performed. In such a case, the act of reproaching is routinized since it is performed in the presence of a specific group of people and in a given location. However, in excerpt 3 (a continuation of excerpt 1), the reproach is performed in public, on the radio, and is broadcast to everyone who is listening. The location is physically the hospital ward but then the reproach act is felt beyond this physical location.

As established above (4.1), having a child out of wedlock and while still in school is against the social norms and expectations of the Cameroonian society within which the program is set. Before performing the reproach in excerpt 3, the host asks several questions to ascertain that the young mother clearly fell short of social expectations. She is not married and she is still in school. The host even asks for the name of the

school and the class, both of which the young mother provides. This further removes any possibility of anonymity that she could otherwise enjoy. The first reproach turn “And how comes? You know it is not easy to start breeding children when you are going to school, not so?” ends with the tag question, “not so?” which leaves the interviewee little room for contradiction. She, therefore, timidly and remorsefully says “Yes.” This acknowledgement is followed by a series of three very pointy questions, “How? Are you happy about this? Was it a mistake?” which are not really intended to be answered but indicate the extent to which the host, now taking on a mother-like role, is dissatisfied with the young mother’s behavior. As in the typical family context where authority lies with parents and is consolidated by their age superiority, the young mother knows it is expected of her to be humble and to accept the reproach. She, therefore, confesses that “It was a mistake” and makes it clear that she has accepted the situation, “But I just take it as it comes,” and whatever consequences it might expose her to.

Excerpt 3. M.E. 23-year old, unmarried, student (22–12–2007). *Continued from excerpt 1*

Host: Where do you school?²

Lady: Step by Step Secondary School

Host: Step by Step. What form?

Lady: Form five.

Host: And how comes? You know it is not easy to start breeding children when you are going to school, not so?

Lady: Yes.

Host: How? Are you happy about this? Was it a mistake?

Lady: It was a mistake. But I just take it as it comes.

...

Host: After this, do you intend to go back to school?

Lady: Yes

Host: Are you sure this is not going to be a setback to you?

Lady: No.

Host: The child’s father, has he been here to see you?

Lady: No.

Host: He has not yet come.

Lady: Yes.

Host: Does he know that you are here?

Lady: No

Predicating the reproach with “You know it is not easy...” implies that the young mother is supposed to have been aware of the social norm, the need to respect it and the consequences if it is not respected. In other words, she must have been socialized into the society. This leaves the mother no chance to say she did not know. The only option she has is to confess that it was a mistake. She is ready for the consequences: “I just take it as it comes.”

The reproach does not end with giving birth before marriage but extends to the relationship between the mother and the father of the child. Like an adult member of the society who is expected to enforce its norms, the host asks about the father of the

child: “The child’s father, has he been here to see you?” To drive the point home that the child was born out of an illicit, probably secret relationship, the host asks if he is aware at all: “Does he know that you are here?” In excerpt 4 below, the young mother says she will inform him later: “with time he will know,” further accentuating the fact that having a child under these circumstances is against norms and expectations of the society. She does not celebrate the birth of her child in the same way as the mother in excerpt 2 (see Appendix 2) does. She subsumes her individual face into the collective group’s face, accepts the reproach and promises to be a better member of the society. Perhaps to atone for letting the group down, she agrees to advice girls in her age who are at risk of making the same mistake (excerpt 4).

4.3 Giving Advice on Social Expectations

A feature of collectivist societies is their inclusiveness, i.e., the desire to keep every member attached to, and included within, the network of the group. It includes the readiness to help those in pain, share with those in need and assist those in difficulty (see Nwoye 1992, Kasanga 2011). This is because the esteem and public recognition of their group depends on all its members abiding by the norms and playing the roles expected of them. It, therefore, becomes logical that a reproach be followed by a piece of advice that is intended to re-grant the wayward member access to the group. It could be equated to giving them another chance to qualify as or maintain their place as a deserving member of the group. A recent study on health advice in radio phone-ins in France and Cameroon by Drescher (2012) reveals how Cameroonian callers are ready to reveal their health issues on radio in the hope of receiving advice if not from the traditional healer in the studio then from other listeners. The radio becomes an extended family space where interpersonal assistance is expected to be the norm.

The data from the “Happy Birthday” program reveals two levels of advice-giving: the asymmetrical level where the host functioning as an adult or a mother figure advises the young mother, and the peer-level advice in which the young mother advises other women of her age and standing (excerpt 4). Whereas the former is directed at the interlocutor who is in the same location as the advice-giver, the latter is directed at a group that is not present.

In excerpt 4, the peer-level advice pits education against pregnancy before marriage. The host requests for this advice, not for the young mother, who has made the mistake, but for her “friends who are, who are still in school.” Both avoid addressing the issue of marriage directly but it is implied in their conversation.

Excerpt 4. M.E. 23-year old, unmarried, student (22–12–2007). *Continued from excerpt 3*

Host: Ok. What piece of advice do you have for your friends who are, who are still in school?

Lady: I want just to encourage them to work hard in school because education is the solution, is the best thing in life nowadays.

...

Host: The child’s father, has he been here to see you?

Lady: No.

...

Host: You don't want him to know?

Lady: No, with time he will know.

Host: With time, what does that mean? You are supposed to work hand in glove, you don't know that? Because the two of you will have to put your heads together to be able to raise this child, is it a lie?

Lady: No, it is true.

In the asymmetrical level advice, the host uses the power granted to her by her age and social status to advise the young mother. She asks very threatening questions like "With time, what does that mean?" and refutes the mother's decision not to inform her child's father of the delivery at this time. Not aware of the reasons behind this decision, the host nevertheless strongly advises her to inform him since the two have to put their "heads together to be able to raise this child." Again, like in excerpt 3, her advice ends with a tag question, "is it a lie?" which inherently leaves her no options but to agree, "No, it is true."

Age and social status stand out as unavoidable postcolonial pragmatics components in understanding not only the intentions of the speakers but also their linguistic choices. They both share a common group face that must not be lost, not even when a young member does not live up to societal expectations. They immediately switch to kinship-like roles, move the interaction into family-like space where reproach, confession, apology, and advice take place often. The public nature of the radio does not stop them, neither are they repudiated by the audience—they too are part of the collectivist entity. In the next section, I explain why the rest of the community is either enthusiastically invited to join in celebrating the birth of the child (excerpt 6) or is largely kept out probably out of shame for not living up to the society's norm (excerpt 5).

4.4 Involving the Group

In Ghanaian English, the traditional ceremony welcoming a newly born baby to the community is called *outdoor*ing. Here the baby is presented to the society as their new member. In Cameroon English, a similar celebration of birth is called *born house*. These ceremonies indicate that childbirth is a positive event that is celebrated not only by the parents and immediate family but also by the society as a whole. However, as excerpts 5 and 6 show, these ceremonies are tied to other social norms and expectations. They tend to be performed mostly when the child is born in wedlock. As discussed below, the unmarried mother feels inhibited to involve many people in the birth of her child, not even the father.

Pride in respecting social norms goes with letting others know. This frees the individual of the onlooker response and any negative attitudinal rejections s/he could be exposed to in the society. In the two excerpts below, there is a significant disparity in the number of people M.E., the unmarried student, (excerpt 5) and A.E., the married student, (excerpt 6) inform about the delivery of their children. While M.E. feels reluctant to inform many people—certainly because she knows she let them down by

having a child while still in school and before getting married, A.E.'s list is unending. She is married and has just completed her training as a teacher.

Excerpt 5. M.E. 23-year old, unmarried, student (22–12–2007). *Continued from excerpt 1*

Host: Ok, you have people you like to inform that you are ahh in this hospital. This is the Christmas time. Who are these people? And what do you want to tell your people?

Lady: I want to tell my father Mr. Daniel A. at Alakuma and my step-mother Madame Esther T. and my aunt Mamy Monika at Nitop 1 and my aunty at Alachuo Mamy Esther.

Host: These are the only persons?

Lady: hmmnn

Excerpt 6. A.E. 23-year old, married, teacher-trainee (17–11–2007). *Continued from excerpt 2*

Host: You have every reason to give him all the glory. Who are the people you want to inform that you have been so blessed? Your relatives and friends?

Lady: Yes, my relatives and friends.

Host: Call their names.

Lady: My friends, I have U.V. She in Dschang. I have N.M. in Dschang. I have P.C. here in Bamenda. I have my friend in Yaounde, Elsy. I have E.P. in Yaounde. I have my relatives. I have my cousin, A.G in Yaounde. I have my in-laws, Anim. I have Frisa. They are here I n Bamenda. I have hmm.

Host: These women are sitting by you.

Lady: I have my mother.

Host: Call her name.

Lady: Madame M.C. I have my sister F.E. and the husband F.N. I have my loving husband Mr. A.R. I have my loving brother-in-law, Mr. M.H. and not forgetting my brother-in-law in Yaounde, Mr. M.C.

Host: Are those all? Madame, we thank you for talking with us. This is CRTV.

In terms of numbers, M.E., the unmarried mother, informs only four people, all of them close family members (her father, step-mother and two aunts) whereas A.E., the married mother, informs fourteen individuals and three groups, i.e., relatives, friends and in-laws. M.E. opts not to inform the father of her kid. He is not mentioned by name either. But A.E. proudly refers to her husband by name along with an endearment term, “my loving husband Mr. A.R.” Because she lived up to the expectations of society, she feels morally justified to inform as many people as she wants. The host asks her up to five times either to inform people of the birth or to call the names of these people. However, the host asks M.E., the unmarried mother, only twice. The weight of the guilt in M.E. can be seen in the absence of any endearment terms in her list of names. Contrastively, A.E. uses several endearment terms, e.g., “my loving brother-in-law, Mr. M.H.” (excerpt 6). That both use honorifics (i.e., Madame, Mr.) and kinship address terms (Aunt, Aunty, Uncle, Mamy, Sister, etc.) is indicative of the respect system of the society. As said above, respect is age-determined and often conceptualized according to the kinship hierarchy of COMMUNITY IS FAMILY.

4.5 Showing Respect in line with Social Norms

Showing respect in line with the society's social norms is central to cohesion within collectivist societies. Patterns of addressing or naming people in these societies follows respect norms, which generally function through age difference, social hierarchy, kinship hierarchy, etc. A number of studies on postcolonial societies have pointed to the importance of address forms for respect in these societies. Anchimbe (2008) and Wong (2006) describe the use of kinship terms in Cameroon English and Singapore English respectively, with focus on the respect functions they play. Mühleisen (2005) discusses the place of kinship terms in the presentation of selves and others in Caribbean English-lexicon Creoles. Mulo Farenkia (2010) illustrates how politeness is realized through kinship address forms in Cameroon French while Drescher (2012) signals the importance of address strategies in advice-giving on a radio call-in program in Cameroon. What is common in these studies is the speakers' desires to project a cohesive picture of their community, i.e., as a place where respect rules are followed judiciously. We see similar tendencies in the data analyzed in this chapter.

Two types of respect-based address strategies are used in the data. The first relies on the use of honorifics while the second relies on kinship terms. In both of them, the choice of terms signals unequal or asymmetrical relationship between the mothers and the host of the program. As excerpt 7 shows, (see also excerpts 1 and 2), the host is addressed using the honorific *Madam* by M.E. and the kinship term *Aunty* by A.E. Whereas the honorific reflects the formal context of the radio (note that it is also used by the host to refer to A.E.), the use of kinship terms relocates the interaction to family space. Within the family, interaction is less formal but more flexible because the kinship space offers speakers more freedom to talk about private issues. A.E. benefits from this especially because, in the eyes of her society, she is a deserving member who respects the norms and lives up to expectations (see Appendix 2).

The choice of the kinship term *Aunty* could also be accounted for by the way the host presents herself on the program. She is a mother herself and is viewed as mother figure since she introduces herself on air as "the mother of all children."

Excerpt 7. Both M.E. and A.E. (see excerpts 1 and 2 above)

Host:	Good morning.
Lady (M.E.):	Good morning Madam. I am called M.E.
Host:	Good morning Madam.
Lady (A.E.):	Good morning Aunty

The honorific and kinship address forms in excerpt 7 are used by interlocutors in the interview for each other. However, as excerpts 5 and 6 show, they can also be used to refer to people who are not present. Besides *Aunty*, other kinship respect terms like *Mamy* (plus name) are used. In some cases, *aunt* and *Mamy* are used together for the same person, "my aunt Mamy Monika" (excerpt 5). As said above, kinship-based respect norms are so strong in this collectivist society that they are imposed on the public space of the radio where honorifics would be expected.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the lines between individual and group face, public and private domains, as well as personal and societal preferences are blurred or malleable in postcolonial collectivist societies. Using Cameroon as an example, these aspects were analyzed in two interviews from the prime-time Saturday morning program “Happy Birthday” on the Bamenda regional station of the Cameroon government-owned national radio network. Bearing in mind that the interactions take place in Cameroon English, an indigenized variety of English in a postcolonial context, social norms and expectations of the society were factored in and the excerpts analyzed using tenets of postcolonial pragmatics. Several components are at work in the interactions, guiding speakers’ choices as they navigate through the complex web of societal norms and expectations. Among these components, as demonstrated above, are age, kinship roles, societal norms and respect.

The need to respect the society’s norms weighs equally on the host and the interviewees, i.e., the mothers who have just given birth. They cooperate to ensure the society does not lose face, even when their individual faces or prestige is sacrificed in the process. For instance, M.E. endures reproach from the host for having a child before marriage and while still in school. She does not fight back the reproach or seek to justify why she did it. She confesses that it was a mistake, accepts the consequences and promises to be a better member of the society in the future. This can only be explained using the collectivist nature of the society, which conceptualizes itself as a family. The host does not hesitate to adopt a mother-like or aunt-like role when she realizes M.E. needed to be reprimanded and advised as expected of her within the family set up. M.E. does not repudiate this but rather respectfully cooperates with the host, while accepting the role of daughter or niece suggested in the host’s switch.

An approach to this data that ignores the complex hybridized structure of this postcolonial society risks misrepresenting the interactions, the speakers’ motivations and choices, and the intended meanings. Postcolonial pragmatics—designed to capture the various components that speakers rely on in interactions—offers a suitable path to analyzing these discourses, whether produced in an indigenized variety of an ex-colonial language, a pidgin, a creole, an indigenous lingua franca, or an inter-ethnic indigenous language. What is important is their history of colonially-induced co-existence, multiplicity and hybridism. Although colonialism triggered several major changes, multilingualism, human and language contact, interethnic interactions, etc. were already a part of these societies even before they emerged as Western-styled nation states. Studying them requires theories that take these facets into account.

Appendices: the Complete Exchanges Between the Host and the Mothers

Appendix 1. M.E. 23-year old, Unmarried, Student (22–12–2007)

Introductory: Our usual rendezvous ladies and gentlemen takes us to the postnatal section of the regional hospital right here in Bamenda from where we shall be reaching

you. Please don't go away. Our first mother on today's edition is on Bed 23. She is so young and she is the mother of a baby boy. Who is this young lady.

Host: Good morning.

Lady: Good morning madam. I am called M.E.

Host: How old are you?

Lady: 23 years.

Host: Is this your first delivery?

Lady: Yes.

Host: Are you married?

Lady: No.

Host: Are you in school?

Lady: Yes

Host: Where do you school?

Lady: Step by Step Secondary School

Host: Step by Step. What form?

Lady: Form five.

Host: And how comes? You know it is not easy to start breeding children when you are going to school, not so?

Lady: Yes.

Host: How?... Are you happy about this? Was it a mistake?

Lady: It was a mistake. But I just take it as it comes.

Host: Ok. What piece of advice do you have for your friends who are, who are still in school?

Lady: I want just to encourage them to work hard in school because education is the solution, is the best thing in life nowadays.

Host: After this, do you intend to go back to school?

Lady: Yes

Host: Are you sure this is not going to be a setback to you?

Lady: No.

Host: The child's father, has he been here to see you?

Lady: No

Host: He has not yet come.

Lady: Yes.

Host: Does he know that you are here?

Lady: No

Host: You don't want him to know?

Lady: No, with time he will know.

Host: With time, what does that mean? You are supposed to work hand in glove, you don't know that? Because the two of you will have to put your heads together to be able to raise this child, is it a lie?

Lady: No, it is true.

Host: Ok, you have people you like to inform that you are ahh in this hospital. This is the Christmas time. Who are these people? And what do you want to tell your people?

- Lady: I want to tell my father Mr. Daniel A. at Alakuma and my step-mother Madame Esther T. and my aunt Mamy Monika at Nitop I and my aunty at Alachuo Mamy Esther.
- Host: These are the only persons?
- Lady: hmmnn
- Host: What are you wishing for them?
- Lady: I wish them happy new year and Christmas in advance.
- Host: And what do you wish for yourself?
- Lady: hmmmnn smiles. A happy. .ehmm a good health
- Host: Good health, so that you can be able to take care of your baby, right?
- Lady: Yes.
- Host: This is CRTV, we are glad you accepted to talk with us. Bye bye
- Lady: Bye.

Appendix 2. A.E. 23-year old, Married, Teacher-trainee (17–11–2007)

- Host: The second baby girl on today's edition. Her mother is on bed 2. She is young, beautiful, radiating. Who is this young lady?
- Host: Good morning Madame.
- Lady: Good morning Aunty
- Host: What is your name?
- Lady: My name is A.E.
- Host: How old are you?
- Lady: 23 years old.
- Host: Are you married?
- Lady: Yes
- Host: Is this your first delivery?
- Lady: No. Second.
- Host: Was the first a baby girl too?
- Lady: Yes.
- Host: So you have two daughters.
- Lady: Yes, I do.
- Host: Are you happy?
- Lady: Very very happy.
- Host: When you were pregnant, did you know you were going to give birth to a baby girl?
- Lady: I knew it because I doing what is known as word confession, preaching the word of God.
- Host: Really.
- Lady: Because the Bible says "God is going to fulfil my heart's desire." So I was confessing it that I was going to give birth to a baby girl.
- Host: And your heart's desire has come to fruition.
- Lady: Yes.
- Host: Have you thanked God?
- Lady: Yes, I have thanked God.

- Host: What do you do in life, if I may ask?
- Lady: I am a teacher.
- Host: Where do you teach?
- Lady: I just graduated with the last batch of ENS. I haven't been posted.
- Host: You have so many degrees. The one from ENS and now you have children. You need to thank God, don't you think so, Madame?
- Lady: That is very true. I have to thank God.
- Host: Can you sing? Do you want to sing something?
- Lady: Yes, I can sing (she sings a song: "I give God all the glory").
- Host: You have every reason to give him all the glory. Who are the people you want to inform that you have been so blessed? Your relatives and friends?
- Lady: Yes, my relatives and friends.
- Host: Call their names.
- Lady: My friends, I have U.V. She in Dschang. I have N.M. in Dschang. I have P.C. here in Bamenda. I have my friend in Yaounde, Elsy. I have E.P. in Yaounde. I have my relatives. I have my cousin, A.G in Yaounde. I have my in-laws, Anim. I have Frisa. They are here in Bamenda. I have hmmm.
- Host: These women are sitting by you.
- Lady: I have my mother.
- Host: Call her name.
- Lady: Madame M.C. I have my sister F.E. and the husband F.N. I have my loving husband Mr. A.R. I have my loving brother-in-law, Mr. M.H. and not forgetting my brother-in-law in Yaounde, Mr. M.C.
- Host: Are those all? Madame, we thank you for talking with us. This is CRTV.
- Lady: Thank you very much.
- Host: May you stay blessed!
- Lady: I am blessed.
- Host: Bye bye.

Notes

- 1 I wish to thank Marie Oben, host of the program at the time, for making her archive of the program available to me.
- 2 This is a common Cameroon English expression for "Where do you attend school?" or "Which school do you attend?"

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