The Performative Aspect of Spontaneous Prayers in Cameroon: A Study in Evasive Media in Interactions

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ABSTRACT: *Studies on prayers have focussed mainly on their vertical interactive dimension between the faithful and the deity. As a result, notably with spontaneous prayers, prayers have hardly been seen as a form of horizontal communication, or as 'evasively' having a communicative value with the faithful, who constitute their immediate audience. This study therefore considers the horizontal effect spontaneous prayers have on the audience that listens to, or overhears, them. Our analyses show that spontaneous prayers, which turn out to be a medium of communication in its own right, can facilitate complex conversational events as they can be used for self-endearment; for control of the behaviour of the audience; as a pre-emptive measure to ward off blame; as a mild way of being insolent; to dish out criticisms or disapprove of someone's behaviour with little retort; to give praise and advice without sounding suspicious. Given that spontaneous prayers enable speakers to better communicate sensitive information, we classify them as a medium of tact and a diplomatic weapon that helps in repairing Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) in conversation.*

KEYWORDS: spontaneous prayers, religious register, speech acts, evasive media, Cameroon English

INTRODUCTION

Prayers, especially spontaneous prayers, are sacred interactions with a deity (say God), yet they can provoke reactions from the congregation, which is their immediate audience. I remember a prayer said in the Catholic Church at Elig-Effa – Yaounde in Cameroon in the early 90s[1], criticising the way the elite sided with the government against the masses, and the way an important personality, who felt particularly concerned and guilty, staged a walk-out from the church. In this situation, he could neither take the priest to court, nor give him a sound talking-to, as he would do under other circumstances. He could only bear a grudge against the priest. This is because the message was being addressed to God

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[1] Cameroon, just like many other African countries, was the seat of political activism in the 90s, which saw the transition from a one party state to a multiparty one.

and not to him directly. Local priests, pastors and other religious have used this religious licence to address sensitive issues in society and go Scot free, where others would be reprimanded on counts of subversion.

This paper has been motivated by our long participant observation of spontaneous prayers in Cameroon. They have the peculiarity that, unlike stock prayers (often recited in unison), they are not pre-determined, by way of being written somewhere. Someone in the audience crafts them, while the rest listens to them and appreciates them. They may come naturally, yet their content is influenced by context, which could be the day-to-day activities, difficulties, aspirations, wishes and happenings of those who say and listen to them. They also vary according to circumstances, such as the kind of event and the prayer giver's ingenuity, inspiration and style. The creative dimension of spontaneous prayers therefore makes it possible for somebody to say one that has never been said before. The interest in studying spontaneous prayers is also vital in that, in recent times, more and more religious sects are against stock prayers, arguing that prayers emanate from the heart and are not stored in the head, and so cannot be subjected to rote learning. We also live in an age in which prayers have become purely dramatic events, in which the force they carry, or their effectiveness of some sort, seems to depend on the voice pitch and modulation with which they are said, and the accompanying gestures. This means that, rather than being persuasive, most prayer sessions have taken coercive turns, becoming a mixture of persuasion and command, which are the primary characteristics of magic. We have heard many pastors in Cameroon end their prayers in such ways as: "I command that …, I reject…, I claim…, etc." The so-called charismatic prayers and charismatic groups are commonplace today in Cameroon, penetrating even dogmatic Catholicism. We were also motivated by the discovery that the audience at prayer sessions generally tend to appreciate prayers. They give them such qualities as powerful, great, irrelevant, etc. We therefore concluded that, if people can qualify prayers, then somehow the prayers communicate to them.

One well-known characteristic and function of language is its potential to serve as a tool for communication, and one thing that reinforces this function is medium. When we claim that certain topics cannot be discussed on the phone, when we say that administration is better written, we are only segregating content according to medium (see Halliday (1985). Distinction has thus been made between speech and writing, and formal and informal language (see Halliday (1990). Linguists have also studied the effect of such media as the telephone, the letter, the monologue, the telegram of the yesteryears, and the now vulgarised text message, and have brought out the contextual peculiarities inherent in them. The whole enterprise of knowledge of what it takes to communicate effectively has been subsumed in Hymes' (1972) communicative competence.

Registers, understood as language use according to situation of use, have also animated linguistic research. Some key resounding instances have been professional jargons like legal language, medical language, journalese, and also politeness language (be it according to status or social distance) with its cross-cultural innuendos. Religious register has also preoccupied researchers (cf. Downes 2015). Focus has been on the language used in churches for liturgical write-ups (the Bible, church lectionaries, song and prayer books, etc.) and for other church activities, including sermons, and religious rites (see Crystal (1964), Montgomery (2008), Ong (2013), kliueva and Ryazanova (2016). Crystal (1964:149) defines liturgical register as "a set of distinctive verbal forms used in official public worship on behalf of a religion". According to him, liturgical register is often formal; avoids adverbial clauses as much as possible; and uses archaisms, the subjunctive mood, formulaic expressions and specialised vocabulary. He cites instances such as "O God, who in thy infinite mercy…"; "the only begotten son of God;" and such utterances as "brethren" and "dear beloved" (Crystal 1964:150ff).

Within the religious register, prayers seem to have occupied centre stage, with *The Lord's Prayer,* delivered within the framework of the Sermon on the Mountain (see Matthew 4-6: 9-14), being one of the most researched prayers ever. Researchers have been concerned with the content of prayers (see, Ong (2013) and Bandak (2017), the moves made therein (see Downes (2015:16), and their healing powers with the sick (see Grossoehme and NanDyke (2010). There has also been some concern about what prayers do to those who say them, and fairly so with what we do when we pray, (see Downes (2015), and Hoshikawa and Staudigl (2016)). This means that prayers have a perlocutionary force *a la* Austin (1975), so that they have been studied as speech acts (see Evans (1963), Levenston (1984), and Sahrifi and Ebrabhimi (2012). Van Noppen (2015:1) postulates that "The other activities in Christian life and worship, such as praying, hymn-singing, meditating, preaching, praising, blessing, forgiving, excommunicating, confessing one's belief, theologising and many other religious practices are, first and foremost, forms of linguistic behaviour, which may be described as different sorts of speech acts". However, studies on prayers (be they for their content, for their stylistic preferences, for the moves therein or for what we do when we utter them) have focussed only on their vertical interactive dimension between the faithful and the deity. Again, notably with spontaneous prayers, they have hardly been seen as a form of horizontal communication, or as 'evasively' having a communicative value amongst the faithful, who constitute their immediate audience. This study therefore considers the horizontal effect spontaneous prayers have on the audience that listens to, or overhears, them.

Cameroonian studies on language and religion have focussed principally on church procedures and precisely on the linguistic choices made there. Kouega (2008) considers the use of language in the Catholic Church in Yaounde. Kouega and Ndzotom (2011)

consider multilingual practices in Presbyterian churches in Cameroon. Kouega (2016) investigates the linguistic choices in the Full Gospel Mission Cameroon. Kouega (2018) explores language use in what he terms "international Pentecostal churches" in Cameroon. These works not only attest to the use of French and English (with systematic *to-and-fro* translations) in delivering the 4 to 13 parts they compute for their services, but also to the use of some local languages in some such church activities as singing. Ndzotom (2016 and 2021) explores historical factors contributing in the choice of the liturgical language in some churches in Cameroon. Kouega and Emaleu (2013) also study the factors influencing linguistic choices in sub-urban churches in the South-West Region in Cameroon. These efforts have been legitimate, as Cameroon is a multilingual country, so that concerns about who uses what medium, where, with whom and for what effect are of sociolinguistic relevance.

The key church activities often considered in Cameroonian religious language research work have been sermons, singing, sessions of deliverance and tongue speaking. Apart from Ndzotom (2018), who considers the prayer response, "Amen", little attention has been paid to prayers, be they spontaneous or recited in unison. Little attention has also been paid to the functions that language plays in general, or that particular languages play, in Cameroonian churches. Generally, Cameroonian religious language studies have not considered the speech acts performed by Christians when they carry out church activities. The focus of this paper is not with the communicative aspect of prayers between mortals and a deity, which is mostly the mainstay of theology, but with their effect on the immediate audience during prayer sessions. Our purpose is therefore to assess the indirect communicative dimension of prayers, that is, to look at prayers in their situational context. We put forward the following arguments: that prayers are solemn speeches of a sort; have a supposed audience (the deity), but also and more importantly, an immediate audience when said aloud; and bear an illocutionary force on that immediate audience.

Theoretical considerations
Far from being only a structural system, language is also a tool used to achieve acts or to do things. One concern of pragmatics is the effect or the force that accompanies an utterance. This has to do with how a speaker uses language in a particular way to produce a particular effect. Speech acts are accomplished at the very moment of their utterance. These include baptism, wedding, priestly ordination, installation ceremonies in posts of responsibility, etc. These are controlled by conventional rules. Illocutionary acts, on their part, are those accompanied by a certain effect on the listener. A sentence is made and a certain reaction is expected from the listener or audience. Communication here means using words with a certain intention for a particular purpose.

The consideration of prayers as a form of conversation between humans and a deity hinges on Goffman's (1981) analyses of participant roles. He outlines the roles involved in a complicated speech event. According to him, the speaker role can be segmented into three sub-roles. The *Principal* is the one who bears the responsibility of what is said. The *Author* is the one who formulates the actual words, and the *Animator* is the one who utters the actual words. There is also the immediate *Addressee* of the utterance. The *Target* is the one to whom the words are ultimately oriented. Finally, the *Overhearer* is the one who just listens to the words. In a complicated speech event, one person may play more than one role, and as Keane (1997:58) puts it, the "distribution of roles may serve to displace responsibility away from particular individuals, or diffuse it among many". A good example of this complex distribution of roles would be seen in the case of possession or glossolalia (speaking in tongues), during which the spirit and the human being are in the same body, so that the human may not singly bear responsibility for, or be attributed the role of author of, what he is saying.

About Prayers
Generally speaking, prayers are a communion with God or a super being (a deity), who is not accessible to the physical world. They could be spoken or simply meditated. In this sense, incantations of any type, traditional rituals, and the like, are also prayers. From a linguistic point of view, prayers are a medium of communication between a human in the physical world and a deity (God, a god or goddess) in the unapproachable world beyond, and could therefore be classified as interactive. Most prayers involve stretches of utterances either meant for praise, for request, for persuasion, for promise or for thanks made to the deity. They are special in that they do not involve a face-to-face conversation between interlocutors, a quality that draws them closer to the telephone conversation. Like letters, they are conversational and may not have a direct reply, being unidirectional. Unlike letters, they are instantaneous and do not need to be carried physically to their destinations.

All spontaneous prayers report on man's experiences and aspirations in this world. These can only be the result of his interaction with his neighbours. It is also because most prayers are always tuned to suit the occasions for which they are meant. The theme of a prayer depends on the occasion during which it is addressed. The content, and therefore relevance, of prayers are substantially influenced by external events. For example, a prayer in a requiem, for a sick man, in an anniversary celebration, in a political rally, in a family meeting, and at a closing ceremony or morning devotion in a secondary school will have different structures, styles and contents. It would be a deviant thing for someone to say a requiem prayer during a wedding ceremony. Participants will condemn it because of its non-concordant nature. This shows that people appreciate prayers and can tell concordant ones from non-concordant ones, and relevant ones from irrelevant ones. Hence, prayers have an immediate audience that evaluates them.

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Analyses of some spontaneous prayers
Spontaneous prayers in Cameroon are speech events that could have the following effects on the immediate audience, and not God for whom they are supposed to be directed:

They could be used for self-endearment

1. O God, grant our father long life and prosperity. Let him see
    his grandchildren and enjoy the fruit of his labour.

This prayer was said during a family meeting for a father who had been understood to yearn for long life. The child who said the prayer wanted to arouse special consideration from his father. Maybe if he said it in an ordinary conversation, it would not carry the same force. He therefore chose the prayer medium.

On the 23 July 2004, a famous Nigerian Gospel singer paid a visit to Cameroon and was to have a performance in Yaounde. She was on a CRTV[2] morning interactive programme, "The Wake up Show" for publicity. Shortly after she presented her mission to Cameroon, someone called and asked to pray for her. He said the following prayer:

2. O Lord, thank you for Agatha Moses. We thank you for her voice, which she
    uses to praise you. As she performs in Yaounde today, Lord, let her health be
    the best. We know, Lord, that during that performance, your angels will guide
    her to success. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

This is an anonymous Cameroonian caller talking to a Nigerian gospel singer. Instead of just wishing her well in simple terms, he preferred the prayer medium. It is arguable that the caller was conscious of the illocutionary force inherent in prayers. He knew that prayers have a bigger impact on communication because her wellbeing was reported to the deity and it was therefore not the place of any mortal to impede it. Here, we see that the caller wanted to endear himself towards her, to wish her well and to praise her qualities. For effectiveness, he chose the prayer medium.

Ntumfor Nico Halle, the National Electoral Commission (NEO) representative for the North West Region in Cameroon also said a prayer over the CRTV radio for free and fair elections in Cameroon on 27 September 2007. This was three days to the re-run elections in the country. The question one may ask is why he did not arrange to be invited for an interactive programme on that medium, as other politicians do, and why he did not just publish his political opinion on a newspaper column. Choosing the prayer medium was

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[2] The CRTV (Cameroon Radio and Television) is the state run radio and television house in Cameroon.

not only a better means of enforcing fairness on election stakeholders, but also a way of positioning himself as an active NEO representative.

Prayers could be used to control the behaviour of the audience.

3. O God, may this meeting and its deliberations go on successfully. Let all participants contribute their ideas generously so that together we can permit this association to grow from strength to strength. Inspire us, O Lord, with the grace to think straight. We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus, Amen.

This prayer was said at the beginning of a meeting. The speaker is entreating the participants to participate fully. Notice that it is fairly common in Cameroon to have as the point on the agenda for meetings the so-called "opening prayers". Some meetings even have closing prayers. During these prayers, the speakers communicate their wishes to, and even dictate their expectations on, the audience.

The following closing prayer was made after a meeting whose resolutions had many sensitive stakes:

4. We beg on you, O Lord, to let all proceedings remain a secret among us. Let no one release them to incriminate a friend. Bring responsibility to bear on us, Lord. We ask this through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord, Amen!

The prayer giver used it to prescribe responsible behaviour on the audience.
In the same vein, they could be used to persuade individuals to embrace a particular line of behaviour. A family had a child who played truancy at school and also stole even from neighbours. In a family prayer session, his mother said the following prayer for his sake:
5. Oh God, let little Che know that schooling is not for his parents, but for his own very good; let him know that he will never be anything in future if he does not work hard and that habits like theft and bad friends will only land him in problems in future. Give him the strength, O Lord, to fight the devil's temptation. We pray to the Lord, Lord hear us.

The 2004 presidential elections were announced in Cameroon on 11 September 2004 for 11 October 2004. On 13 September 2004 in a NEO conference, after giving a talk on how elections should be carried out, the NEO representative for the North-West province, Ntumfor Nico Halle, asked for prayers[3]. To avoid the monotony of having the religious

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[3] Because of space constraints, these prayers cannot be reproduced here. We will rather focus on their effect on the audience.

do prayers, he called on the following personalities to lead the prayers: an Aldo[4], a Social Democratic Front[5] (SDF) representative, the Government Delegate[6] of the Bamenda Urban Council, the Fon[7] of Chongwa and the Fon of Mankon. Everyone in his turn prayed for peaceful, free and fair elections. The Fons invoked their ancestors to mediate for Cameroon in the elections. The question is why prayers in a preparatory meeting for elections? Why did he choose the laity? Why were the contents of the prayers the same? The NEO representative's interest was impressing good election practices on participants, and he achieved this objective using prayers.

It can be seen that the NEO representative pre-empted the contents of prayers and tactfully chose stakeholders to pronounce the content. The stakeholders were going to be more committed to what they said through prayers. This also had a stronger influence on the audience because stakeholders were now reporting to God and listeners had nothing to do apart from listen carefully. This had a greater effect on the audience because all that was said during the conference was summarized using a powerful medium, prayers. This was an effective way of ending a controversial conference.

They could be used to ask for excuse or as a pre-emptive measure against blame. **A host had this to say before a meal he offered his village meeting guests**[8]:

6. Oh Lord, bless this food, which you have given us today. We know that it is small and is all that this family could offer. We know, O Lord, that you fed 5 000 people with just 5 bread and 2 fish. We are confident that you will do same for the quantity we have before us today. Amen.

The host succeeded in appealing to the consciences of his guests to pardon any eventual shortage in food. This made up for the slimness of the food quantity.

They could be used to insult an audience, especially when such insults would hardly be acceptable in other contexts:

7. O God, may these children know that we did not come here to see their meanness. You may have given Mr. Ngong robbers in the name of children. Even as we pray now, O Lord, we know you will let them treat their father in a more befitting manner.

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[4] An aadministrative authority in Muslim communities.

[5] This party was the most popular opposition party in Cameroon in the 90s.

[6] An appointed Council authority with dominion over a group of councils and their Mayors.

[7] Traditional ruler in the North-West Region in Cameroon

[8] Very often, such guests contribute money to cover food and drink expenses.

In the above prayer, the speaker uses the words "meanness" and "robbers". These would be insults if the children did not know before hand that that was popular opinion about them.

4.5 *They could be used as a tool for criticism, especially where freedom of speech is punishable*. On a New Year church service[9] in 2005 in Kumbo Diocese, a Catholic teacher in a Catholic church had the following prayer to say:

8. Our society is full of social ills such as injustice, corruption, selfishness, greed, laziness, and lies-telling. Kill the fear in us so that we may denounce all these ills and stand for the truth. Help the church leaders in our diocese to take such decisions that will enhance the dignity and well being of their Christians, especially the catholic teacher, who has been systematically reduced to a beggar over the years. We pray to the Lord, Lord hear us.

Here, the prayer giver succeeds in criticising church actions in church without risking any retort.

They could be used to directly disapprove of a people's behaviour. A member of the elite from Momo Division, who was also an official of the Ministry of National Education, visited one of the government schools in 1999. He discovered that the campus was filthy and made the following rather sarcastic prayer:

9. O God, we thank you that the campus is clean, thanks to the unrelenting efforts of Mr X, the Principal. Let all the students who refuse to tidy the campus be cursed. We pray that all the recalcitrant teachers should have a stone tied to their necks and be drown in the deepest oceans where they will mash their teeth.

They could be used to give praise. This is often the case in a requiem service, where a prayer is said for the dead, since culture holds that we should not talk ill of the dead.

10. O God, Mr. John has been your servant. He has helped the poor; he was a renowned preacher of your word. He contributed generously to the welfare of your church as seen in his prompt payment of his church dues. We loved him, but you loved him more. Thank you, Father, for we know that even now you have reserved a good place for him near you, as he has completed his mission

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[9] The so-called "Prayers to the faithful" in the Catholic Church are often spontaneous prayers. In Cameroon, some Catholic Churches liberalise them so that any member of the congregation who feels inspired can say them.

here on earth. Father, grant his family fortitude to bear this great loss.

They could also be used to give advice, especially where such advice will be considered treacherous or subversive. A South African religious authority, who visited Cameroon in 1992 amidst political unrest, had the following prayer to say:

11. God, let there be peace in this country that has not known peace for sometime now. Let the two competing parties stop conflict and let Mr. Biya know that having the second highest number of votes, Mr. Fru Ndi deserves the post of Vice President and not that of being under house arrest. Bless the country Cameroon abundantly.

The prayer medium avoided diplomatic complications.

DISCUSSION

The Solemnity of Prayer Sessions

It is important to first note what happens in a prayer session. In most religions, people rise to pray, kneel down, bow their heads, remove their caps and at times shoes, claps their hands, or at least maintain some kind of submissive posture. Though this often constitutes a sign of reverence to the deity from a religious perspective, it also practically wards off any form of distraction that could be caused by hands, eyes or legs (see Capps and Ochs (2002) for the cultivation of prayerful attitudes in children). Hence, a high degree of attention is to be expected during prayers. More importantly, etiquette wants that no one should disturb during a prayer, say by speaking or taking a phone call. By so doing, prayer events take a solemn character. The Pentecostal churches systematically use 'Amen!' as attention- or consent-getter to ensure the participation of the immediate audience. A prayer session is therefore one of the greatest social instances in which common attention and the least opposition can be simultaneously expected.

The speaker in a prayer session, as well as his audience, is aware of these unique characteristics provided by prayer sessions. Our postulate is that the speaker uses the prayers to elicit the responses he desires from his audience. Though the content of prayers may be restricted by context, prayers provide a cover under which the speaker passes information to the whole congregation, to particular groups of people or to an individual in it. What is meant here is that prayers constitute a whole communicative event. By dint of their solemnity, they are used to do things. They are therefore a specific speech event that operationalises speech acts.

Prayers as evasive media

Keane (1997:59) cites Lawless (1988) as arguing that "divinely inspired testimony allows Pentecostal women in patriarchal communities to exert influence that would not be

available to them were they to claim full responsibility for their words". This clearly supports the role of prayers as an evasive medium of communication. From the above analyses of spontaneous prayers, it is seen that prayers provide an opportunity for people to communicate effectively what would otherwise not be said properly because of other factors such as shyness, fright, intimidation, repression, press censorship, inattentiveness, lack of opportunity, and other socio-cultural and diplomatic barriers. Apart from just helping in the transmission of a message, they earn a quicker response from the immediate audience. There are greater chances that the heady truant-boy in (5) above will start making a conscious effort to change. At the same time, the mother who said this prayer chose an effective medium where overt advice may have failed. The wife, who "tells" her husband during a family spontaneous prayer to be more economical in his spending by stopping the waste on alcohol, avoids a quarrel and/or punch, and has entreated her husband to change for the better. Prayers can therefore be seen as the diplomatic weapon of tact, which people use to solve social problems in Cameroon. This quality comes from the fact that prayers have a supposed audience (the deity), but while they are being said, the effect on the immediate audience can be remarkable.

One thing that is very evident in this investigation is that medium is also very important in the interactive process of negotiating meaning and of stimulating a faster response in a listener. It sounds somewhat paradoxical that people listen and respond better to what is not said to them directly. If we consider the behaviourist approach to language in the Bloomfieldian style, in which what is said provokes a response in a listener, we will add that the intensity of the stimulus also depends on the kind of medium used. In the literature, we have been told that the content of what is said is primarily important and that the manner of saying it is equally as important. Here, we suggest that the kind medium also reinforces manner.

Just like a wise African patriarch would choose a proverb to better express himself, a religious would choose a prayer to do same. Shy children prefer to write letters to their parents to make sensitive requests, which would be refused them in face-to-face exchanges. Shy lovers find it easy expressing their feelings in letters, through a third party or through a text message. The letter and text message could also be considered evasive media in this sense.

The illocutionary force carried by prayers is a presuppositional matter. Pragmatic discourse analysis favours meaning drawn from a speaker's intention and not the content of what is said, which will mean a different thing in a different context. The fact that the listener responds in conformity with the speaker's intention is proof that the context is shared between them and governs their event. The fact that the listener also has some expectations from the speaker (e.g. that prayers should be relevant) is also important. Spontaneous prayers in the Cameroonian context also manifest this characteristic. The

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surface intention could be to entreat the Lord, but deep in the speaker's mind, he may want to manipulate his audience. The fact that the audience reacts in accordance with the speaker's real intention is proof that the medium is effective.

That the seeming passiveness of an immediate audience can contribute to effective communication to that audience is not strange in Cameroon. In the country, it is possible to speak to someone with the intention of provoking a reaction from the third party. A husband who tells his close friend in the presence of his wife that the wife in question is the loveliest thing he has is not only informing his friend of something, but is also talking to the wife, maybe to let the compliment bear a bigger effect. A sycophantic journalist is not concerned about the effect of his praises on the listeners on the radio or television, but about the fact that he is going to endear himself to some politician. In fact, communicating to someone indirectly in the fashion described above is important because it is less suspicious. We live in a society where direct over-zealousness could be mistaken for flattery for money or other gains. It is therefore more reasonable to use other indirect means. This is the knowledge that cunning people learn and use in society. The conclusion here is that evasiveness makes for better communication. This goes to reinforce the notion of indirectness as a politeness strategy in conversational English.

The use of evasive media for effective communication has a serious bearing in pragmatic research, especially in what concerns the participants in speech events. Focus in studies in interactive sociolinguistics has always been on the dyadic pattern where turns are taken and the effective conversation has been subsumed under Grice's (1989) Cooperative principle and other principles by Leech (1983). Each has proposed maxims said to govern a good conversation. For example quantity, quality and relevance have stood out as the summary of what it takes to be a good conversationalist. However, the evasive media hypothesis shows that at times better communication is achieved when our audience is addressed indirectly, as though we were addressing someone else, that is, when the audience plays the role of Overhearer in the Goffman (1981) model. This relates to the notion of face in pragmatic politeness. Prayers can therefore be said to repair FTAs (face threatening acts).

Finally, prayers have this that they remove the speaker's person or responsibility from the event and look as if they were said honestly and in good faith for good intentions. By so doing, they provoke a better and more benign reaction from the audience because they were not meant for them. Spontaneous prayers are therefore solemn speeches and diplomatic tools that work wonders in Cameroon.

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