Pozdrav i odzdrav kao elementarni pragmemi jezičnoga bontona

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GREETINGS AND FAREWELLS AS ELEMENTARY PRAGMEMES OF LANGUAGE ETIQUETTE

Abstract

Greetings are one of the oldest forms of human communication. They can be verbal, verbal/non-verbal and non-verbal communication acts. Greetings are used in direct communication dialogues. This communication usually consists of two components: invocation as a greeting and revocation as a farewell. Together they are commonly referred to as greetings. First and foremost, greetings belong to the category of linguistics and communication. However, they are social and ideological acts, too, thus the acquisition of their accurate and appropriate use is required with respect to communication partners and situation specificity. At different levels of education, higher education institutions included, and particularly those responsible for training of future pre-school and primary teachers, the mission includes promotion of linguistic appropriateness and, subsequently, linguistic politeness. Hence, greeting and farewell as pragmemes of language etiquette are amatter of theoretical and practical interest in the study of linguistic appropriateness.

Keywords: greetings and farewells, pragmemes of language etiquette, language culture in higher-education institutions

1. Introduction

Each instance of well-mannered conversation anywhere in the world begins with a greeting. There are written and unwritten rules of human communication. The latter has existed, it is assumed, from time immemorial. The act of greeting itself has always produced rules on greetings that defined verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the participants in communication, the so called communicators. Many of those are prescribed in books of different titles, contents and style nowadays, handling civilized behaviour and communication. The rules on greetings are an unavoidable part of language etiquette, and greeting phrases are its elementary pragmemes.

Croatian ethnologists first understood greeting as a custom explaining that it was "the simplest **custom** used to express friendship, loyalty, respect" (Balenović, 194 cited in Pintarić, 2002, p. 122). Neda Pintarić (2002) states that greetings belong to cultural pragmemes[1,] i.e. those used in civil interaction – in rules of civilized behaviour, which makes them an important constituent of language etiquette. "A greeting can be defined as a cultural verbal/non-verbal ritualized dialogue pragmeme in temporary communicational situations of encounters and leave-taking. " (Pintarić, 2001: 303) The same author, besides cultural, adds also sociological foundation to the definitions in 2002, stressing thereby the affective relationship in the mentioned communicational situation between two or more people. Maja Bratanić defines greetings as "the most typical standardized communication situations with ritual functions and a pre-assigned form, considered universals in language use" (Bratanić, 1999: 103).

A greeting possesses a demarcative function since a greeting starts, and a farewell ends a speech act. Pintarić distinguishes three different units in human communication "representing units of expression: the smallest is the speech act, the middle is the speech event and the biggest is the speech situation." (Pintarić, 2001: 298) Greetings and farewells are speech acts realized as verbal, verbal/non-verbal and non-verbal communication. Namely, understanding a greeting as a pragmeme, i.e., "a general multi-level sign containing, implicitly or explicitly, all non-verbal elements" (Pintarić, 2002: 42), implies that it, apart from its lexical structure, includes also non-linguistic elements, therefore we can also understand greetings as "gesture-letters". Interlocutors usually supplement a greeting with a gesture: waving hands, fingers, blowing a kiss – mainly by women; raising a hat, touching its rim or raising a hand to the head – by men. If the distance is too big for a verbal greeting, it comes down to non-verbal, to waving. Only verbal greetings appear in radio and television shows and during classic phone and mobile phone communication. There are, however, everyday examples, that we are witnesses of (or we take part in), when during telephone conversation, apart from verbal, there also non-verbal communication, although people are aware that the latter is not visible to the interlocutor.

In everyday direct communication a speech situation is framed by greetings when arriving and departing. Pintarić claims that "speech genres at the beginning of communication are called invocation (introduction), and those at the end revocation (departure)." (Pintarić, 2001: 207) Also, she adds that greeting is a dialogue act consisting of arrival and departure phrases (Pintarić, 2001: 303). In invocation "a communicator draws attention to him-/herself in order to communicate with other people" (Pintarić, 2002: 122) by using a greeting. It should be stressed that "greetings implicitly imply, for example, politeness of those using them, their education, social views, social status, etc." (Deželjin and Mildner, 2009: 287).

"As a sociolinguistic unit, a greeting is under different social, cultural and political influences and changes. Therefore, a greeting can express a welcome, a wish for health, welcoming, long life and respect for others, and social status taken into account we can distinguish religious, political and age greetings."" (Pintarić, 2001: 297) The author later on adds some other types of greetings – time period greetings, health greetings, life greetings, welcoming greetings, respect and youth greetings (Pintarić, 2002: 123). Greetings and farewells have their own special language forms – greeting phrases. When meeting someone, frequently the same lexeme can be used as a greeting phrase both when arriving and departing, for example, npr. *bog – bog*, *zdravo – zdravo* etc.

Democratization of Croatian society and changes in social and political fields havealso reflected onthe ways of greeting. It is visible in changes in the use of greeting and farewell phrases. In the 1990s, the greeting *zdravo* (be healthy) vanishes completely. Although being a

greeting, wishing someone health, and also being a part of an everyday prayer, with time it has become burdened with a connotative meaning. Namely, for many years in the second part of the 20th century there were attempts to reduce Croatian greeting phraseology to only one ideologically acceptable greeting – *zdravo.* "Single-mindedness aspires to simplify everything – even greetings. *Zdravo* was supposed to be used on all public and private occasions." (Težak, 1995: 84) Only the greetings with temporal category survived: *dobro jutro* (good morning), *dobar dan* (good day) and *dobra večer* (good evening). But, the last has been called into question. In Croatian language the noun *večer* is either feminine or masculine, and when declined the greeting it is either *dobra večer* or *dobar večer*. Nevertheless, a greeting phrase *dobro veče* has been imposed. Such a greeting contains the neutral noun *veče*, and therefore, the mentioned phrase does not belong to the Croatian greeting corpus.

As a farewell *zdravo* was also used as a universal greeting, but there were also *doviđenja* (till we see each other) and *laku noć* (good night). Pintarić says that the politicization of greetings is a common phenomenon in Croatian society and "greeting *zdravo* has become, after the fall of socialism, negatively connoted since it was imposed to all the structures in socialist times (…) with the creation of new Croatia this greeting was considered to be negative (…) regardless of its meaning and wishes for good health (...) After the changes in 2000, this greeting started to be used again, but less frequently. It got its place as a greeting among friends, not any more when children greeted their seniors." (Pintarić, 2001: 301) Politicization of greetings in socialism has made some greetings ill-suited, primarily the religious ones. But, they have not disappeared, they have just withdrawn to the frames of family greetings, being regular in smaller and rural areas, as well as among the elderly.

It has already been said that some greeting phrases remained intact even during socialism because they are timeless and because they appeared in different geographical and national territories, and have been politically neutral. There existed also regional greetings *ćao*[1], and *adio*[2] (where originally religious greeting could not be recognized), and *bok*[3], which with such a spelling did not sound as a religious greeting. "The greeting *bog* first appeared in kajkavian records and speech as *bok*, because the communists were sensitive to religious greetings. Greeting phrase was not treated as an empty word, it was attributed religious meaning. In order to function as a greeting, it was graphically turned into a semantically empty word *bok*. This greeting was only used among friends. It has spread, its etymology has been revived (spelled *bog*, but frequently not capitalized) and it could be said that it has taken the place of the greeting *zdravo* considering frequency and prevalence." (Pintarić, 2001: 301) From regional and urban (Zagreb) greeting it has turned into a generally accepted Croatian greeting. It is nowadays used alongside standard, conventional greetings *dobar dan, dobro jutro, dobra večer*, as well as farewells *doviđenja, ugodan dan* (*pleasant day*)*, laku noć*. These are usually used to greet people of different ages or different social statuses. Religious greetings coexist as well, mostly in smaller milieus.

But, it is known that unconventional greetings are also in use, those that frequently come to being by play-like language changes of conventional greetings, for example, *doviđenja* and *dobar dan* turn into the ellipses *đenja* and *dan* through clipping, there are also diminutives *đenjce, bogić*. And *zdravo* turns into *vozdra* when rotating syllables, and it is nowadays maybe even more frequent than the greeting it originated from.

In the Croatian language there are numerous greeting phrases, their repertoire is exceptionally wide, but they (still) should be known how to be used properly, therefore this research attempted to determine which greeting and farewell pragmemes are being used at the

time, and whether their selection is in accordance with social and situational context. Special attention was paid to the frequency of the popular greeting pragmeme *bog/bok* as a part of students' greeting phrases.

Research method

The research encompassed 207 students (N=207) of the Faculty of Education in Osijek, mainly of female population (there were only 12 or 5.7% male participants), coming from rural and urban areas. A set of six questions served as a research instrument. Questions were answered by students voluntarily and anonymously in the period of time that was not strictly limited. Five questions were open-ended, and one was a multiple-choice question. The purpose of the research was to get insight into the repertoire of greeting and farewell phrases among students, future teachers. Namely, the aim of the paper was to find out which greetings and farewells are most common among peers, which greetings and farewells are most commonly used by students in communication with adults, which in communication with children, with members of their households, as well as which greeting and farewell phrases are used by students in official and public institutions. Also, we wanted to find out if the students are familiar with the greetings and farewells that used to be used. We particularly wanted to examine which greeting form is used by students in written version – *Bog, bog* or *bok,* and if they know its etymology.

2. Results

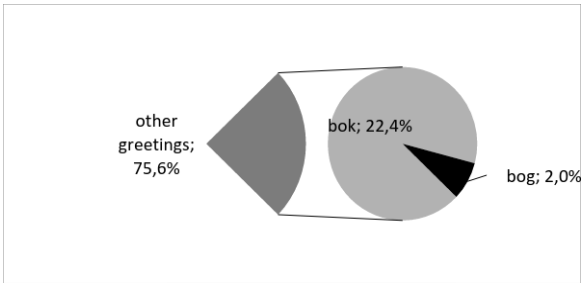
The majority of students, in accordance to our assumptions, greet with *bok* and *Bog,* being the most common peer greeting and farewell pragmeme. Also exclamations appear among the greetings: *Eee!*, *Eiii!*, *Eeej!*, *Ej!*, *Haj!*, *Hej!* Whole exclamation sentences are used as greetings as well: *O, vidi ti njih! (Oh, look at them!), Gdje si? (Where are you?), Što ima? (What's up?).* Reduced forms of conventional greetings are also found: *jutro (morning), dan (day), đenja (bye), noć (night),* syllable rotated greeting *vozdra* from *zdravo* and the pragmemes of reduced and multiplied sounds: *doba daaan*.

When communicating with adults, i.e. their seniors, and when officially greeting, the most commonly listed are conventional greetings *Dobar dan, dobro jutro, dobra večer* and the farewell *doviđenja*. These are etiquette pragmemes of neutral meaning. Only individually we find *bok/bog, đenja, svako dobro, ćao,* serving this function, but these are more appropriate to peer and informal communication.

The question that required examinees to list greetings and farewells they heard from members of their households and from locals produced religious greetings as answers: *Hvaljen Isus (Praised be Jesus), Hvaljen Isus i Marija (Praised be Jesus and Mary), Hvaljen Bog (Praised be God!),* i.e. *Zbogom (With God), Bog s tobom (God be with you), Bog s vama (God be with you), Uvijek hvaljen (Praised forever), Uvijeke (Forever), Bog daj (Give us God).* As an old greeting we find *Dobri den,* which probably indicates Slovakian origin of communicators. Apart from that whole sentences were listed as greetings and farewells: *Jesi dobar? (Are you good?), Gdje si, prijatelju? (Where are you, my friend?), Ooo, kolega! (Oooo, colleague!), Pozdrav svitu! (Greetings to the world!), Kako je (How is it going?)? Kako smo? (How are we?),* intended for the peer population, of course.

The most common student greeting in everyday communication is *bok*, i.e. significantly less frequent *Bog/bog.* Since according to the frequency they greatly go beyond all the other greetings, the collected data was statistically processed in order to find out which are the most common written forms and also students' knowledge of etymology of this most frequent greeting (figure 1.)

Figure 1. Percentage of greeting *bok/bog* in the total sample of greetings and farewells, with their separate percentages within common sub-sample



Out of the total number of all individual assertions of greeting pragmemes (*n*=3800) 927 participants (24.4%) refer to the use of greeting forms *bok* (852; 91.9%) and *bog* (75; 8.09%). This difference in the number is statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 927) = 651{,}27$, $p < {,}001$, which indicates a statistically significant higher frequency of pragmemes in written form *bok.* Namely, the participants should have circled one of the suggested written/spelling forms of those frequent pragmemes and they circled *bok, bog, Bog,* in this order, 179 (87.4%), 16 (7.8%) and 10 (4.9%), including two missing answers. This means that, in spontaneous written answers, the research participants most commonly use the greeting pragmeme written with a small letter, i.e. in the written form *bok.*, i which is also confirmed explicitly by the choice of this particular written form.

In spite of the frequency of the use of all the three forms of this greeting pragmeme, being a part of one fourth of all the greetings, including conventional greetings like *Dobar dan* (etc.), in spoken and written communication in different social situations and status relations, the etymology was, when the participants should have given the explanation for the greeting, stated by defining (9; 4.35 %) or by determining the meaning (76; 36.7 %), known to only a bit more than the third of the participants (i.e. 85/207; 41.06 %). As the explanations of the etymology of this greeting the participants most frequently list clipping of traditional Christian greetings referring to God (71/85; 83.53 %). The other participants, slightly less than two thirds (122/207; 58.94 %), do not know the meaning of the greeting they most preferably use.

Conventional greetings with temporal category follow thereafter, as well as the greeting *ćao.*

One third of participants answered the question if they have given any thought to the meaning of the mentioned greeting by saying they did not think about it, one third had given it some thought, but did not know the answer, and the others tried to explain it. The majority of the students who tried to give an explanation recognize a fundamentally religious greeting, even when written with a small letter *bog* or *bok*. There is also an explanation that the name of God should not be mentioned in vain and therefore the sound of *bok* appears. Two students' explanation related *bok* to Bog, which evidently, was read by some students. Namely, there is

also an explanation that German/Austrian greeting phrase Mein Buecken (my bow), used by Zagreb traders to address customers, was clipped only to Bokn (bow), which eventually was reduced to *bok*. But, there are also statements by the same source that completely disallow this statement.

Students also give an explanation that *bok is a part of human body* (!?).

3. Discussion

Although the research has shown a very diverse range of greetings and farewells coexisting among student population, it is evident that they can be grouped in two big groups. The first consists of conventional ways of greeting (most commonly with temporal category), for example *dobro jutro, dobar dan, dobra večer, doviđenja,* intended for senior interlocutors or people on formal occasions. The other group are less conventional, non-stereotyped, even completely unconventional greeting-farewell phrases, intended for their peers, close people and family members. The research affirmed (and confirmed) that the dominant greeting is *bok/Bog, bog* (in all three written forms).

The research results are on the trail of former scientific elaborations (Bratanić, 1999; Kuna, 2009) and observations by P. Pavličić: "Something happened to greetings. And it is clear what happened: their number reduced a lot and came down to a single syllable, which can be used to greet a senior and a younger than yourself, as well as a richer and a poorer, and the one who tailors your hat and the one you tailor it for. Greetings have been dying out, one by one as exotic birds, and now barely a few remained, apart from the omnipresent *Bog* (...) *Bog* escalated and took bigger and bigger geographical and social spaces. There were attempts to replace traditional greetings with *Zdravo*, and now the multi-purpose greeting has voluntarily been acquired." (Pavličić, 2012) Originally a religious greeting phrase *Bog s tobom (God be with you), Bog ti pomogao (God help you), S Bogom (With God)* etc. became a monosyllabic word, "one syllable" that is, and in addition to that, has been semantically emptied through devoicing. Nevertheless, whatever we might think about that, particularly this form *bok* is the most common greeting today. On the one hand, it can be noticed that numerous conventional greeting phrases have been reduced to that "one syllable", in all its three written variants, and on the other hand unconventional expressions appear as results of phonological reductions, ellipsis, syllable rotation, diminutivization, taking place of conventional greetings and farewells. But, they are not in accordance with language etiquette.

Students' ignorance of the most common greeting that they themselves frequently use, making it a semantically completely empty word, seems unusual.

4. Closing word

The research has resulted in an insight into the repertoire of students' greeting pragmemes in different communicational situations and in relation with their different social roles. It is for certain that greeting phrases have changed. Pavličić lists possible reasons for the modern way of greeting. He says that the democratization lead to bringing down differences among social levels, and that the pace of modern life requires practicality, and hence the shortness of greetings (instant politeness). Also, a greeting does not express respect, but desire

for intimacy (Pavličić 2012) "It seems that the time of more intimate addressing has arrived, and the recent neutrality of the mentioned (conventional greetings, remark D.S.) expressions seems to be a sign of emotionally cooler relationships or of a high level of hierarchy" (Kuna, 2009: 89).

All the listed reasons seem acceptable since the times and circumstances change greetings as well. Finally the questions arise: Do we have the knowledge of greeting? Are the greetings in use nowadays acceptable on any occasion? Are we supposed to be taught how to greet? Greeting is taught from early childhood in the family, it is taught at school. It subsumes strong speech models. Due to the facts mentioned and in order to achieve a better greeting culture we should plead for language etiquette. Therefore, it is not unimportant to nourish greeting in educational context. Though we cannot be satisfied with "instant politeness", let it be the first step towards greeting culture.

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