



DICTION IN SELECTED FACEBOOK BIRTHDAY POSTS: INSIGHTS FROM LEECH AND SHORT'S LINGUISTIC STYLISTICS AND HALLIDAY'S SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

Facebook is a social media platform that enables users to interact, share messages, photographs, and videos regardless of distance. Previous studies have examined its role in knowledge sharing, communication, information acquisition, academic performance, and its effects on students. However, little attention has been paid to the diction of birthday messages on Facebook and the linguistic patterns they reveal. This study addresses this gap by analysing ten birthday posts selected from twenty-five collected posts based on their rich and recurring linguistic features. The analysis combines Leech and Short's lexical category in linguistic stylistics with Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. Findings show that endearment terms, code-switching, slang, colloquialisms, lexical borrowing, wishes, prayers, and figures of speech express intimacy, solidarity, and friendliness while enhancing the aesthetic quality of the messages. These linguistic features perform interpersonal, socialization, narrative, poetic, and aesthetic functions, reinforcing relationships and reflecting the distinctive sociolect of Facebook users.

Keywords: *Diction, Facebook, Birthday Posts, Celebrant, Systemic Functional Linguistics*

STYLISTIQUE LINGUISTIQUE DANS LES MESSAGES D'ANNIVERSAIRE SUR FACEBOOK : APPORTS DE LA LINGUISTIQUE STYLISTIQUE DE LEECH & SHORT ET DE LA LINGUISTIQUE FONCTIONNELLE SYSTÉMIQUE DE HALLIDAY

Résumé

Facebook est une plateforme de réseau social qui permet aux utilisateurs d'interagir, de partager des messages, des photos et des vidéos, quelle que soit la distance qui les sépare. Des études antérieures ont examiné son rôle dans le partage des connaissances, la communication, l'acquisition d'informations et les résultats scolaires, ainsi que ses effets sur les élèves. Cependant, peu d'attention a été accordée au style des messages d'anniversaire sur Facebook et aux schémas linguistiques qu'ils révèlent. Cette étude comble cette lacune en analysant dix publications d'anniversaire sélectionnées parmi vingt-cinq publications recueillies, en fonction de leurs caractéristiques linguistiques riches et récurrentes. L'analyse combine les catégories lexicales de Leech et Short en stylistique linguistique avec la linguistique fonctionnelle systémique de Halliday. Les résultats montrent que les termes affectifs, l'alternance de codes, l'argot, les expressions familières, les emprunts lexicaux, les vœux, les prières et les figures de style expriment l'intimité, la solidarité et la convivialité tout en rehaussant la qualité esthétique des messages. Ces caractéristiques linguistiques remplissent des fonctions interpersonnelles, de socialisation, narratives, poétiques et esthétiques, renforçant ainsi les relations et reflétant le sociolecte distinctif des utilisateurs de Facebook. Conclusion

Mots-clés : *Langage, Facebook, Avis d'anniversaire, Célébrant, Linguistique fonctionnelle systémique*

Introduction

Goodwill messages serve as a way of establishing phatic communication among humans. Such messages are employed to identify with others in special events and situations such as weddings, births, deaths, birthdays, anniversaries, landmark achievements, etc. Via these messages, people felicitate the celebrants and share in the pain of the bereaved or in the loss. It is not uncommon for people to express their feelings on the situation or the people in the situation. Such messages reveal what others wish the celebrant or the bereaved. Many people have been comforted and have found solace to navigate difficult times via goodwill messages. Hence, such messages have helped to strengthen relationships and enable people to know the perceptions of others about them. In this digital age, goodwill messages facilitate celebrating or identifying with others irrespective of the distance.

Birthday is a yearly event in the lives of individuals. With or without elaborate ceremonies, people felicitate their acquaintances and friends on this occasion. Presently, it is common for Facebook to remind friends of individuals who are connected to one another on this social media platform of the natal anniversaries of one another. At times, individuals announce their birthdays on this platform to notify their Facebook friends and, thus, attract felicitations and goodwill messages from others. At such times, individuals send their goodwill messages in form of posts to the celebrants. Such messages often reflect feelings about, wishes and prayers for, as well as the adoration of the celebrants. Individuals are at liberty to express themselves as they deem it fit to let the celebrants know how they feel about them (the celebrants).

New media, in the words of Taiwo (2013, p. 59), implies "all forms of media driven by modern technologies that are networkable, interactive, digital and capable of being manipulated". He notes that the new media hinges on the utilization of digital technologies marked:

“by interconnected network of audio, video and electronic text communication. The new media allows for an increase in communication flow and speech of communication between people in different parts of the world.... The new media allows people to express themselves through internet websites, discussion forums, social networking sites, blogs, chats, texts messages and other user-generated media” (pp.59-60).

Taiwo establishes that users are able to create, modify and diffuse content with others via simple inexpensive tools and that the shared messages can reach innumerable users who are connected together. Examples of such new media are Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, Netflix, Spotify, Twitch, Podcasts, blogs, Wikis, etc. Advantages of the new media include the ability of the users to respond to, share and interact easily, create and disseminate personal content, make content available for easy accessibility, and accessibility of the content at any convenient time.

Facebook is a platform in the new media. The development of Facebook is attributed to Mark Zuckerberg, in conjunction with his fellow Harvard University students – Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovits, Andrew McCollum, as well as Chris Hughes (Tien, Hung & Tien, 2019). Facebook was launched on February 4th 2004. At the initial stage, it was meant for interaction among Harvard University students before it was expanded for the global audience/users. Accessibility to Facebook is made possible through computers, smartphones and tablets. As of 5th June, 2025, the active users of Facebook on a monthly basis was estimated at 3.04 billion. Through Facebook, users who are connected can share and respond to messages/posts, photographs and videos. Through Facebook Messenger, users can engage in communication directly and modify messages. Facebook affords the users to join interest groups of their choice and get notifications on the activities of their friends and the pages they follow (Peters, 2023). The crucial rationale for the use of Facebook, among others, are making friends, relationship maintenance, involvement in a virtual community, passing time, accessing personal entertainment and peer conversation (Gibbs et al. 2019; Yau & Reich 2019). Facebook has also been adopted for educational purposes especially in teaching and learning (Slim & Hafedh, 2019; Vazquez-Cano & Diez-Arcon, 2021; Enwereji, van Rooten & Morgan, 2024).

This research is aimed at examining the lexical category, which is also known as diction, used by some Nigerian young adults to felicitate their Facebook friends on the occasion of their birthdays, as well as the functions of these lexical patterns. The research questions guiding the study are: (i) What are the linguistic elements that constitute the diction of the select Facebook posts? (ii) What are the functions of these linguistic elements?

These linguistic elements that are habitual of these Facebook users are an index of their sociolect. Various approaches have been deployed in the study of style. Among them are style as choice, style as individuality, style as situation, style as deviation from the norm and style as iteration (Crystal & Davy, 1969; Leech & Short, 1981; Azuiké, 1992; Osundare, 2003; Lawal, 2003). Style as iteration is brought to the fore in this paper due to its relevance to this study.

Style as iteration conceives style as a set of linguistic features that are habitual of an author, a language user or a group of people. Schapiro (2003) submits that this approach refers to the linguistic elements, patterns, expressions and qualities that are constant in the art of an individual or a group of individuals. Osundare (2003) exemplifies with chatty language which characterizes American literature and proverbial expressions associated with African writing. As such, style as iteration refers to the linguistic patterns that are preponderant in the works of an individual, a language user or a group of language users. This concept is germane to the present work as the study considers the lexical features that are habitual of Nigerian young adult senders of birthday posts on Facebook while felicitating their friends.

There are myriads of research on Facebook as a social media platform. Nadeem *et. al.* (2020), Duru (2023), as well as Manzoor and Ahmed (2024) have looked at the impact of Facebook on the academic performance of students. Freewan (2024) has studied the negative effects of the use of Facebook on secondary school students in Al-Yarmouk area of Bani Kinana District in Jordan. Enwereji, van Rooyen and Morgan's (2024) study dwells on the use of Facebook for knowledge sharing, while Popiolek (2015) studies the role of Facebook in acquiring information. Not only that, Maulana and Harsada (2025) have considered the use of Facebook as a popular communication media in the year 2025. Notwithstanding the above studies, among others, it is observed that scholarly attention has not been given to the lexical patterns that characterise the diction of birthday posts on Facebook; these posts have the potential of unravelling how senders of birthday posts craft their messages to reflect familiarity, solidarity and friendliness while celebrating the natal anniversaries of their friends and acquaintances; as well as the functions of these lexical patterns. This is the gap this study is set to fill. Hence, the present study centres on the functions of lexical features used to encode the diction of select birthday posts on Facebook by Nigerian young adults.

Methodology

This study uses qualitative and descriptive design to describe the diction of selected Facebook posts on birthday anniversary. The identified lexical patterns utilized to craft the diction of the select birthday posts are mentioned, while their functions are also described. Leech and Short's lexical category is deployed to identified the lexical patterns, while Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics is utilized to describe the functions of the identified lexical features. The data for the study were collected from birthday posts of some researcher's friends on Facebook, with their permission. Because of the similarity in the style of constructing the lexical category, ten out of twenty-five birthday posts, with rich linguistic patterns, were randomly selected for analysis. The researcher intentionally opts for birthday posts used by Nigerian young adults to felicitate their acquaintances due to their linguistic adventurousness.

The theoretical framework deployed for analysis is Leech and Short's (1981) lexical category in linguistic stylistics, as well as Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing on the functions those lexical features perform in the posts.

Leech and Short's (1981) enumerate lexical category, grammatical category, figures of speech as well as cohesion and context as the features often considered in linguistic stylistics. Other levels of language description often considered for linguistic stylistics are phonology, morphology, graphology and semantics (Crystal & Davy, 1969; Wales, 1989; Azuike, 1992). Grammatical category deals with the syntactic features used in a text. Such features include parts of speech, phrases, clauses, sentences and other grammatical features considered to be significant. Figures of speech examine the rhetorical features such as simile, metaphor, personification, synecdoche, hyperbole, imagery etc. Cohesion focuses on cohesive devices like reference, conjunctions, ellipsis, substitution and lexical cohesive devices such as antonymy, synonymy, repetition, etc. Morphological processes such as affixation, compounding, coinages, blending, clipping etc. are examined under morphology, while concepts like italicization, paragraphing, spacing, spelling, bold font, capitalization and the like are treated under graphology. The concern of this paper is within the purview of lexical category, hence, our concentration is limited to same.

Lexical category, also known as diction, examines the vocabulary with which a text is built. It considers whether the selected words are simple or complex, formal or informal, archaic or contemporary, concrete or abstract; the registers used to encode the text is also taken into

consideration while dealing with diction (Azuike, 1992). More so, the study of diction observes whether the text incorporates foreign lexemes from other languages. Some analysts consider rhetorical features such as figures of speech/tropes, language embellishments as integral part of diction. In this study, Leech and Short's lexical category is used to identify and describe the linguistic features that constitute the diction of the selected Facebook posts.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was developed by Halliday in the 1960s. The theory conceives language as a tool for building meaning in the real world. Functionalism of the language theory emphasizes the function language performs in real life. Systemic Functional Linguistics thrives on three metafunctions of language viz ideational, interpersonal and textual. Ideational metafunction explains how our (human) experience of the world is shaped by language. It explains how people perceive the world. Halliday and Hasan (1985) note that ideational metafunction captures the field of discourse in which language is used. Interpersonal metafunction explains the interactions and complex relations that exist among people in the society. It deals with the relationship existing between the participants whether formal or informal. Examples of such relationships include master/servant, doctor/patient, teacher/student etc. It explains the roles played by the interlocutors/participants in a communicative event. The relationship existing between the interlocutors influences language use; it determines politeness, tone, formality/informality of, familiarity/distance in language use. Textual metafunction deals with how language is structured or organized to facilitate communication. It indicates whether the mode of discourse is spoken or written, extemporaneous or prepared etc.

The metafunctions are germane to the study. In this study, ideational metafunction relates to the birthday anniversary of the acquaintances of the senders of select Facebook posts. Hence, the occasion influences the choice of words made to craft birthday messages in order to celebrate, rejoice with and express their wishes to the celebrants. More so, since the celebrants are the affectionate acquaintances of the senders of the posts on Facebook, they use language informally and colloquially to entrench familiarity and solidarity as established in the analysis of this study. The mode of discourse of the posts is written. As such, the tripod of systemic functional linguistics is relevant to this study, it has been used to identify and describe the functions the identified lexical patterns perform in the select birthday posts.

Results

This section is dedicated to analysis of the sampled data. The theoretical framework deployed for the analysis of ten samples is Leech and Short's (1981) lexical category, as well as Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), focusing on the functions those lexical features perform in the Facebook posts. First, is the analysis before the presentation of findings.

1. Linguistic Elements of the Diction of the Birthday posts

Datum 1

This datum exhibits a multilingual diction realised through English, Yoruba, and Nigerian Pidgin English. The English expressions, "happy birthday" and "enjoy yourself", function as conventional birthday greetings. The Yoruba lexical item "aburo" (my younger brother/sister) serves as a kinship term that indexes intimacy, solidarity, and shared cultural identity. The remaining expressions are realised in Nigerian Pidgin English, reflecting the informal register of Facebook interactions.

The post is characterised by code-switching, which reinforces familiarity and interpersonal closeness while reflecting the multilingual competence of the interactants. The Nigerian Pidgin expression "you don really grow finish and your sense don set well-well" contains the perfective marker "don", the completive verb "finish", and the intensifier "well-well". These grammatical and lexical elements positively evaluate the celebrant's maturity and encourage responsible behaviour.

Similarly, the prayerful expression "I pray say this year go carry you go places, and anything wey wan disturb your peace, God go run am commot" contains the complementiser "say", the future marker "go", and the relative marker "wey". These linguistic elements express goodwill, divine protection, and shared religious values. The expression "You too dey try!" employs the progressive marker "dey" to commend the celebrant's efforts and encourage perseverance. Overall, the linguistic elements establish solidarity, project admiration and goodwill, and primarily realise the interpersonal and textual metafunctions of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Datum 2

The diction of Datum Two is crafted in English, Nigerian Pidgin English, and a Yoruba lexical filler. It is characterised by code-switching, evaluative lexical choices, lexical repetition, metaphor, idiomatic expressions, prayerful expressions, and a discourse marker.

The English expression, "happy birthday to one of the original people!", functions as a conventional birthday greeting, while the adjective "original" positively evaluates the celebrant's authenticity and integrity. The Nigerian Pidgin expressions, "you get vibe, you get character, you get mind", employ lexical repetition through "you get" to emphasise the celebrant's admirable qualities. The expression "no be everybody dey try am" further reinforces this commendation.

The prayerful expression, "may your blessings full ground, your joy no get part two, and your life continue to make brain", contains metaphorical and idiomatic expressions that communicate abundance, incomparable joy, and a meaningful life. The Yoruba lexical item "oya" functions as a discourse marker that encourages the celebrant to rejoice.

The expressions "burst small flex today!" and "as you enter this new chapter" exemplify idiom and metaphor, making the message more vivid and expressive. Overall, code-switching and these linguistic elements establish familiarity, solidarity, and an informal register, primarily realising the interpersonal and textual metafunctions of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Datum 3

The diction of Datum Three is expressed entirely in English, it comprises endearment expressions, metaphor, synecdoche, evaluative lexical choices, and felicitous expressions. These linguistic elements create a warm, creative, and interpersonal birthday message.

The expression "my dear" functions as an endearment term, expressing affection and intimacy while establishing an informal tone. The metaphor "your life's tale gains another verse" conceptualises life as a poem, portraying the birthday as another meaningful stage in the celebrant's life. The felicitous expression wishing the celebrant "another year marked by delight, reasons for laughter and love" contains positive evaluative lexical items that express goodwill and optimism.

The expression "kind heart" exemplifies synecdoche, where "heart" represents the entire person and symbolises kindness and compassion. This figurative expression highlights the celebrant's admirable qualities.

The endearment expression, metaphor, synecdoche, evaluative lexical choices, and felicitous expressions create an intimate and expressive birthday message. These linguistic elements primarily realise the "interpersonal metafunction" by expressing affection, admiration, and goodwill, while the figurative language enhances the aesthetic quality of the discourse and the coherent organisation of the message realises the "textual metafunction".

Datum 4

The diction of Datum Four is captured in English. It features evaluative lexical choices, metaphor, imagery, hyperbole, slang, colloquial expressions, and prayerful expressions. These linguistic elements portray admiration for the celebrant and create an informal, expressive birthday message.

The expressions "phenomenal friend", "your energy is giving!", "keep shining", and "birthday star" are evaluative lexical choices that commend the celebrant's admirable qualities. "Phenomenal" intensifies the praise, while "friend" reinforces the interpersonal relationship. The slang expression "your energy is giving!" expresses approval of the celebrant's personality and confidence.

The expressions "your glow", "keep shining", and "birthday star" are metaphorical, conceptualising the celebrant as a radiant object. They also create vivid imagery, while "your glow" exemplifies hyperbole by exaggerating the celebrant's admirable qualities. The colloquial expression "everything is giving" further conveys admiration using contemporary social media language.

The prayerful expressions "here's to more soft life", "more blessings", and "more breakthroughs" communicate goodwill, prosperity, and success. Overall, these linguistic elements establish familiarity and solidarity, primarily realising the "interpersonal metafunction", while the figurative expressions enhance the aesthetic quality of the discourse; the coherent organisation of the message realises the "textual metafunction".

Datum 5

The linguistic elements identified in Datum Five perform complementary communicative functions. The endearment expressions "Big Birthday Love to the iconic angel!" and "Blessed Birthday queen" perform "affective", "appreciative", and "interpersonal functions" by expressing affection and admiration for the celebrant. The metaphors "iconic angel", "queen", and "this new chapter" perform "conceptualising", "expressive", and "aesthetic functions" by portraying the celebrant as noble and life as a journey with successive stages. The alliteration in "Big Birthday" and "Blessed Birthday" performs a "phonological function" by enhancing the rhythm and memorability of the message, while the imagery created by these expressions enriches its aesthetic appeal. The expression "your heart" performs "symbolic", "personifying", and "appreciative functions" through synecdoche and personification. The slang expression "You've been serving looks, vibes, and greatness all year!" performs "evaluative" and "identity-marking functions", while the prayerful expression performs "religious", "goodwill", and "interpersonal functions". Collectively, these linguistic elements realise the "interpersonal" and "textual metafunctions" of the discourse.

Datum 6

The diction of Datum Six is expressed entirely in English, consists of endearment expressions, slang, evaluative lexical choices, metaphorical expressions, prayerful expressions, and hashtags. These linguistic elements communicate affection, admiration, encouragement, and goodwill while reflecting the informal nature of Facebook birthday interactions.

The opening expression, "my babe!", functions as an endearment expression that conveys intimacy and emotional closeness between the sender and the celebrant. The slang expression "the one serving confidence, creativity, and class all year long!" employs the figurative verb "serving" and evaluative lexical items to commend the celebrant's personality, creativity, and sense of style.

The lexical items "journey" and "growth" function as metaphorical expressions representing the celebrant's life experiences and personal development. The prayerful expression wishing the celebrant "more collaborations, breakthroughs, and calm moments" conveys goodwill, prosperity, and emotional well-being.

The hashtags "#InfluencerMode", "#ContentCreatorLife", and "#BirthdayGlow" function as digital discourse markers, identifying the celebrant as an influencer and content creator while enhancing the organisation of the message. Overall, these linguistic elements establish familiarity and solidarity, primarily realising the "interpersonal metafunction", while the hashtags contribute to the "textual metafunction" by organising the discourse within the conventions of social media communication.

Datum 7

The diction of Datum Seven is expressed in English, it is characterised by endearment expressions, humour, metaphor, slang, ellipsis, contraction, alliteration, assonance, and prayerful expressions. These linguistic elements create an informal and engaging birthday message.

The expression "Happy Birthday, my cockroach!" functions as an endearment expression realised through humour and metaphor. Although "cockroach" literally refers to an undesirable insect, its playful use conveys intimacy, familiarity, and affection between the sender and the celebrant. The slang expressions "It's giving greatness", "It's giving elevation", and "It's giving God's favorite energy today!" employ the repeated construction "It's giving" to praise the celebrant and express aspirations for success, promotion, and divine favour.

The omission of the conjunction "and" in "go celebrate in style" illustrates ellipsis, while "you've" in "you've earned it" is a contraction, both of them contribute to the informal conversational style. The prayerful expression "More joy, more success, more global visibility" conveys goodwill and wishes for continued happiness and achievement. The repetition of the consonant /g/ in "giving greatness" and "giving God's" is alliteration, while the repeated vowel sound in "more joy, more success, more global visibility" is assonance. Collectively, these linguistic elements depict "interpersonal" and "textual metafunctions", while the figurative and phonological devices enhance the aesthetic quality of the message.

Datum 8

The diction of Datum Eight is expressed in English, it features evaluative lexical choices, prayerful expressions, metaphor, hyperbole, simile, and personification. These linguistic elements create an elevated and poetic style while expressing admiration and goodwill towards the celebrant.

The expression "the elegant one" functions as a positive evaluative lexical choice that foregrounds the celebrant's admirable personality and appearance. Similarly, the expression "your presence brightens the world" positively evaluates the celebrant by portraying his or her influence as uplifting and inspiring.

The prayerful expression wishing that the celebrant's "days deliver abundant kindness" and that the "nights be adorned with peace" conveys sincere goodwill and invokes blessings for a fulfilling and peaceful life.

The expression "your presence brightens the world" exemplifies metaphor and hyperbole. It metaphorically conceptualises the celebrant's influence as light, while exaggerating its impact through the claim that it illuminates the entire world. The expression "your nights adorned with peace" illustrates personification by attributing the human ability to be adorned to "nights". The simile "as candlelight warms the darkest room" compares the celebrant's positive influence to candlelight, thus creating a vivid mental image despite its hyperbolic quality.

Collectively, these linguistic elements enhance the poetic quality of the post, reinforce its aesthetic appeal, and realise the interpersonal and textual metafunctions through admiration, prayer, and stylistic elegance.

Datum 9

The diction of Datum Nine is presented in English, it showcases endearment expressions, directive expressions, evaluative lexical choices, prayerful expressions, synecdoche, and personification. These linguistic elements create an affectionate, poetic, and aesthetically appealing birthday message.

The opening expression, "Happy Birthday, my dear!", functions as an endearment expression that establishes intimacy and affection between the sender and the celebrant. The directive expression encouraging the celebrant to rejoice marks the birthday as the beginning of a new phase of life and reinforces the celebratory tone of the message.

The expression "For this day marks the wondrous hour of your beginning" exemplifies synecdoche, where "day" represents a part of itself, namely the specific hour of birth. Likewise, "gentle spirit" is a case of synecdoche in which "spirit" represents the entire person, highlighting the celebrant's gentle nature.

The prayerful expression "may every blessing chase your steps and every dawn greet you with promise" contains personification. The lexical items "blessing" and "dawn" are attributed with the human abilities to "chase" and "greet", respectively, symbolising divine favour, hope, and new opportunities. Collectively, these linguistic elements enhance the poetic quality of the post and express affection, admiration, and goodwill.

Datum 10

The diction of Datum Ten is expressed in English, it contains evaluative lexical choices, prayerful expressions, synecdoche, personification, metaphor, hyperbole, and imagery. These linguistic elements create an elevated and poetic birthday message while expressing admiration and goodwill towards the celebrant.

The expression "Happy Birthday, great soul!" contains a positive evaluative lexical choice and synecdoche. The lexical item "soul" represents the entire person, while "great" praises the celebrant's admirable character. The prayerful expression "may providence wrap you in its tender cloak and guide you through another fruitful year" exemplifies personification,

as "providence" is attributed with the human abilities to wrap and guide. The expression also conveys sincere wishes for divine protection and guidance.

The expressions "your worth is greater than fine gold" and "your smile a fairer jewel" function as evaluative metaphors, comparing the celebrant's worth and smile to precious treasures. The latter also illustrates hyperbole by exaggerating the value of the celebrant's smile. The expressions "wrap you in its tender cloak" and "your smile a fairer jewel" create vivid imagery, enhancing the poetic quality and aesthetic appeal of the birthday message while reinforcing admiration and affection.

2. Functions of the Linguistic Elements

Below are the functions of the linguistic elements of the diction of the studied Facebook birthday posts.

Datum 1

The linguistic elements identified in Datum One perform complementary communicative functions. The English expressions, "happy birthday" and "enjoy yourself", perform "phatic" and "expressive functions" by conveying birthday greetings and goodwill. The Yoruba lexical item, "aburo", functions as a kinship term, performing "affective", "identity-marking", and "interpersonal functions" by expressing affection and solidarity.

Code-switching in English, Yoruba and Nigerian Pidgin English performs "solidarity", "identity-marking", and "textual functions", reflecting the multilingual competence of the interactants and creating an informal conversational style. The perfective marker "don", the completive verb "finish", and the intensifier "well-well" in "you don really grow finish" and "your sense don set well-well" perform an "evaluative function" by affirming the celebrant's maturity and encouraging responsible behaviour. The future marker "go", complementiser "say", and relative marker".

Datum 2

The linguistic features identified in Datum Two are used for complementary communicative functions. The English expression, "happy birthday to one of the original people!", performs "phatic", "expressive", and "evaluative functions" by conveying birthday greetings and affirming the celebrant's authenticity. The lexical repetition in "you get vibe, you get character, you get mind" performs an "emphatic function", highlighting the celebrant's admirable qualities, while the negative construction "no be everybody dey try am" reinforces this commendation through contrast. The prayerful expression, "may your blessings full ground, your joy no get part two, and your life continue to make brain", performs "religious", "goodwill", and "interpersonal functions" by expressing sincere wishes for prosperity and fulfilment. The Yoruba lexical item "oya" functions as a discourse marker that encourages celebration. The metaphorical expressions "as you enter this new chapter" and "burst small flex today!" perform "conceptualising", "directive", and "expressive functions". Thus, code-switching and these linguistic elements realise the "interpersonal" and "textual metafunctions" by expressing solidarity, admiration, and shared cultural identity.

Datum 3.

The linguistic elements found in Datum Three perform complementary communicative functions. The endearment expression "my dear" performs "affective", "phatic", and "interpersonal functions" by expressing affection and reinforcing intimacy between the sender and the celebrant. The conceptual metaphor "your life's tale gains another verse" performs "conceptualising", "expressive", and "aesthetic functions" by portraying life as a poem and the

birthday as the beginning of another meaningful stage. The evaluative lexical items "delight", "laughter", and "love" perform "expressive", "evaluative", and "goodwill functions" by conveying sincere wishes for happiness and fulfilment. The synecdoche "kind heart" performs "appreciative" and "symbolic functions" by highlighting the celebrant's kindness and compassion. Collectively, the figurative expressions enrich the stylistic quality of the message, while the endearment and felicitous expressions establish solidarity and emotional closeness. These linguistic elements primarily realise the "interpersonal" and "textual metafunctions" by expressing admiration, goodwill, and maintaining a coherent birthday message.

Datum 4

The linguistic features pointed out in Datum Four are used to perform complementary communicative functions. The evaluative lexical choices "phenomenal friend", "your energy is giving!", "keep shining", and "birthday star" perform "evaluative", "expressive", and "appreciative functions" by praising the celebrant's qualities and expressing admiration. The adjective "phenomenal" functions as an intensifier, amplifying the commendation, while the slang expression "your energy is giving!" performs "identity-marking" and "interpersonal functions" by reflecting contemporary social media discourse.

The metaphors "your glow", "keep shining", and "birthday star" perform "conceptualising", "expressive", and "aesthetic functions" by portraying the celebrant as a source of light and success. These expressions also create imagery, making the message vivid and memorable, while "your glow" performs an "emphatic function" through hyperbole. The colloquial expression "everything is giving" reinforces admiration, whereas the prayerful expressions "here's to more soft life", "more blessings", and "more breakthroughs" perform "goodwill", "religious", and "interpersonal functions". Collectively, these linguistic elements primarily realise the "interpersonal" and "textual metafunctions", while enhancing the aesthetic quality of the birthday message.

Datum 5

The linguistic elements in Datum Five are deployed for complementary communicative functions. The endearment expressions "Big Birthday Love to the iconic angel!" and "Blessed Birthday queen" perform "affective", "appreciative", and "interpersonal functions" by expressing affection and admiration for the celebrant. The metaphors "iconic angel", "queen", and "this new chapter" perform "conceptualising", "expressive", and "aesthetic functions" by portraying the celebrant as noble and life as a journey with successive stages. The alliteration in "Big Birthday" and "Blessed Birthday" performs a "phonological function" by enhancing the rhythm and memorability of the message, while the imagery created by these expressions enriches its aesthetic appeal. The expression "your heart" performs "symbolic", "personifying", and "appreciative functions" through synecdoche and personification. The slang expression "You've been serving looks, vibes, and greatness all year!" performs "evaluative" and "identity-marking functions", while the prayerful expression performs "religious", "goodwill", and "interpersonal functions". Collectively, these linguistic elements realise the "interpersonal" and "textual metafunctions" of the discourse.

Datum 6

The linguistic elements found in Datum Six perform complementary communicative functions. The endearment expression "my babe!" performs "affective", "phatic", and "interpersonal functions" by expressing affection and reinforcing emotional closeness. The slang expression "the one serving confidence, creativity, and class all year long!" performs "evaluative", "expressive", and "identity-marking functions" by praising the celebrant's

personality, creativity, and elegance. The metaphorical expressions "journey" and "growth" perform "conceptualising", "motivational", and "expressive functions" by portraying life as a process of continuous development and achievement. The prayerful expression wishing the celebrant "more collaborations, breakthroughs, and calm moments" performs "religious", "goodwill", and "interpersonal functions" by expressing sincere wishes for success and peace. The hashtags "#InfluencerMode", "#ContentCreatorLife", and "#BirthdayGlow" function as "digital discourse markers" and "identity markers", performing "textual", "categorising", and "identity-marking functions" by organising the message and highlighting the celebrant's online identity. Collectively, these linguistic elements realise the "interpersonal" and "textual metafunctions" of the birthday message.

Datum 7

The linguistic elements pointed out in Datum Seven are deployed for complementary communicative functions. The expression "Happy Birthday, my cockroach!" performs "affective", "interpersonal", and "humorous functions" through endearment, humour, and metaphor, expressing intimacy and playful affection. The repeated slang construction "It's giving" in "It's giving greatness", "It's giving elevation", and "It's giving God's favorite energy today!" performs "evaluative", "expressive", and "emphatic functions" by praising the celebrant and projecting success, promotion, and divine favour. The lexical items "greatness", "elevation", and "God's favorite energy" perform "motivational" and "appreciative functions". Ellipsis in "go celebrate in style" and the contraction "you've" contribute to the brevity and informality of the message. The prayerful expression "More joy, more success, more global visibility" performs "goodwill", "religious", and "interpersonal functions". The alliteration in "giving greatness" and "giving God's", together with the assonance in "more joy, more success, more global visibility", performs "phonological" and "aesthetic functions". Collectively, these linguistic elements realise the "interpersonal" and "textual metafunctions" while enhancing the stylistic appeal of the birthday message.

Datum 8

The linguistic elements in Datum Eight are used for complementary communicative functions. The evaluative lexical choice "the elegant one" performs "appreciative" and "expressive functions" by praising the celebrant's qualities. The prayerful expressions perform "religious", "goodwill", and "interpersonal functions" by conveying sincere wishes for peace and prosperity. The metaphors "your presence brightens the world" and "your nights adorned with peace" perform "conceptualising" and "aesthetic functions", enriching the message stylistically. Hyperbole intensifies admiration through deliberate exaggeration, while the simile creates vivid comparison and imagery. Personification enhances expressiveness by attributing human qualities to "nights". Together, these elements realise the "interpersonal", "textual", and "aesthetic functions" of the discourse.

Datum 9

The linguistic elements identified in Datum Nine perform complementary communicative functions. The endearment expression "my dear" performs "affective", "phatic", and "interpersonal functions" by expressing affection and reinforcing intimacy between the interactants. The directive expression encouraging the celebrant to rejoice performs a "directive function" by urging participation in the celebration. The evaluative expression "gentle spirit" performs "appreciative" and "expressive functions" by praising the celebrant's admirable character. The prayerful expression performs "religious", "goodwill", and "interpersonal functions". Synecdoche performs an "aesthetic" and "symbolic function", while

personification performs an "expressive" and "poetic function" by attributing human qualities to abstract entities. Collectively, these linguistic elements realise the "interpersonal", "textual", and "aesthetic functions" of the discourse.

Datum 10

The linguistic elements of Datum Ten are deployed for complementary communicative functions. The evaluative expressions "great soul", "your worth is greater than fine gold", and "your smile a fairer jewel" perform "appreciative", "expressive", and "interpersonal functions" by praising the celebrant's admirable qualities. The prayerful expression performs "religious", "goodwill", and "interpersonal functions" by invoking divine protection and guidance. Synecdoche performs "symbolic" and "aesthetic functions", while personification, metaphor, hyperbole, and imagery perform "expressive", "conceptualising", and "poetic functions", making the message vivid and emotionally engaging. Collectively, these linguistic elements realise the "interpersonal", "textual", and "aesthetic functions" of the discourse.

Discussion

This study has examined the linguistic elements that constitute the diction of selected Facebook birthday posts and the functions they perform, using Leech and Short's lexical category in linguistic stylistics and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The findings reveal that the selected posts are characterised by endearment expressions, evaluative lexical choices, code-switching, slang, colloquial expressions, prayerful expressions, figurative language, discourse markers, lexical repetition, grammatical features, and hashtags.

The analysis shows that endearment expressions are among the most recurrent linguistic elements. For instance, Datum 1 contains the Yoruba lexical item "aburo", while Data 3–10 contain expressions such as "my dear" (Datum 3), "phenomenal friend" (Datum 4), "iconic angel" and "queen" (Datum 5), "my babe" (Datum 6), "my cockroach" (Datum 7), "the elegant one" (Datum 8), "gentle spirit" (Datum 9), and "great soul" (Datum 10). These expressions perform affective, appreciative, phatic, and interpersonal functions by expressing affection, admiration, intimacy, and solidarity between the sender and the celebrant.

Another significant finding is the use of multilingual code-switching in Data 1 and 2. English, Nigerian Pidgin English, and Yoruba are creatively combined through lexical items such as "aburo" (Datum 1) and "oya" (Datum 2), alongside Nigerian Pidgin expressions such as "you don really grow finish", "your sense don set well-well", and "burst small flex today". These linguistic elements function as identity markers, discourse markers, and solidarity strategies. They perform interpersonal, identity-marking, and textual functions by reflecting the multilingual competence of the interactants, establishing familiarity and reinforcing the informal communicative style of Nigerian Facebook users.

The study also identifies evaluative lexical choices, slang, and colloquial expressions as dominant linguistic elements. Expressions such as "original people" (Datum 2), "your energy is giving" and "everything is giving" (Datum 4), "serving looks, vibes and greatness" (Datum 5), "serving confidence, creativity, and class" (Datum 6), and "it's giving greatness" (Datum 7) perform evaluative, expressive, emphatic, motivational, and identity-marking functions. They commend the celebrants' admirable qualities, affirm their achievements, encourage desirable behaviour, and reflect the contemporary linguistic practices of young Nigerian Facebook users.

Prayerful expressions recur in the data. Examples include "I pray say this year go carry you go places" (Datum 1), "may your blessings full ground" (Datum 2), "here's to more soft life, more blessings, more breakthroughs" (Datum 4), "may this new chapter bring bigger

opportunities" (Datum 5), "more collaborations, breakthroughs and calm moments" (Datum 6), "more joy, more success, more global visibility" (Datum 7), "may your days deliver abundant kindness" (Datum 8), "may every blessing chase your steps" (Datum 9), and "may providence wrap you in its tender cloak" (Datum 10). These optative constructions perform religious, goodwill, expressive, and interpersonal functions by invoking divine favour, prosperity, peace, protection, and success for the celebrants.

The findings further reveal that figurative language constitutes a major linguistic element across the data. Metaphor occurs in expressions such as "your life's tale gains another verse" (Datum 3), "birthday star" and "keep shining" (Datum 4), "iconic angel" and "queen" (Datum 5), "BirthdayGlow" (Datum 6), "your presence brightens the world" (Datum 8), and "your smile a fairer jewel" (Datum 10). Synecdoche is evident in "kind heart" (Datum 3), "your heart" (Datum 5), "gentle spirit" (Datum 9), and "great soul" (Datum 10), while personification appears in expressions such as "your heart has been praying" (Datum 5), "days deliver abundant kindness" and "nights adorned with peace" (Datum 8), "every blessing chase your steps" (Datum 9), and "providence wrap you in its tender cloak" (Datum 10). Hyperbole, imagery, simile, humour, alliteration, and assonance are similarly employed across Data 4, 7, 8, and 10. These linguistic elements perform aesthetic, poetic, expressive, conceptualising, symbolic, humorous, emphatic, and phonological functions by making the birthday messages more vivid, emotionally engaging, and stylistically appealing.

Other linguistic elements identified include lexical repetition in "you get vibe, you get character, you get mind" (Datum 2), grammatical features such as ellipsis and contraction in "go celebrate in style" and "you've earned it" (Datum 7), discourse markers such as "oya" (Datum 2), and hashtags including "#InfluencerMode", "#ContentCreatorLife", and "#BirthdayGlow" (Datum 6). These elements perform emphatic, interactional, identity-marking, textual, and organisational functions by creating cohesion, highlighting important information, and situating the messages within contemporary social media discourse.

Viewed through Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, the identified linguistic elements predominantly reflect the interpersonal metafunction by expressing affection, admiration, praise, encouragement, goodwill, and solidarity. They also realise the textual metafunction through the coherent organisation of the birthday messages and the use of discourse markers and hashtags. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the diction of Facebook birthday posts extends beyond conveying birthday wishes to performing significant interpersonal, evaluative, expressive, aesthetic, religious, identity-marking, and textual functions within Nigerian social media communication.

Conclusion

This study examined the linguistic elements that constitute the diction of selected Facebook birthday posts and the communicative functions they perform, using Leech and Short's lexical category in linguistic stylistics and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics as analytical frameworks. The analysis revealed that the birthday posts are characterised by recurrent linguistic elements, including endearment expressions, evaluative lexical choices, code-switching, lexical borrowing, slang, colloquial expressions, discourse markers, lexical repetition, grammatical features, prayerful expressions, hashtags, and figurative devices such as metaphor, personification, synecdoche, hyperbole, imagery, simile, humour, alliteration, and assonance. These linguistic elements perform diverse communicative functions, including affective, phatic, evaluative, expressive, appreciative, motivational, identity-marking, religious, symbolic, conceptualising, aesthetic, poetic, interpersonal, and textual functions. The study also found that multilingual code-switching among English, Nigerian Pidgin English, and Yoruba

reflects the multilingual communicative practices of Nigerian Facebook users and strengthens familiarity, solidarity, and social cohesion. On the whole, the recurrent linguistic elements project the admirable qualities of the celebrants, communicate prayers and goodwill and reinforce interpersonal relationships, thereby constituting distinctive features of the sociolect of Nigerian young adults on Facebook.

Compliance with ethical norms

The online data, consisting of birthday messages posted on Facebook, was collected in accordance with Facebook's privacy settings. No attempt was made to access private content during this process. As the study did not require the direct participation of human subjects, no authorisation or ethical approval was required. However, the study took care to protect the privacy of the authors of the messages analysed. All personal identifiers were removed and all quotations were anonymised.

Conflict of Interest: None

Artificial Intelligence Use: None

Appendix

Datum 1

Happy Birthday, my aburo!
You don really grow finish, and your sense don set well-well.
I pray say this year go carry you go places,
and anything wey wan disturb your peace,
God go run am commot.
Enjoy yourself - you too dey try!

Datum 2

Happy Birthday to one of the original people!
You get vibe, you get character, you get mind — no be everybody dey try am.
As you enter this new chapter, may your blessings full ground,
your joy no get part two,
and your life continue to make brain.
Oya, burst small flex today!

Datum 3

Happy Birthday, my dear!
Upon this day, your life's tale gains another verse.
May it be penned with delight,
spoken with laughter,
and remembered with love.
Happy Birthday, kind heart.

Datum 4

Happy Birthday to the phenomenal friend!
Your energy, your growth, your glow - everything is giving!
Keep shining, keep winning, keep inspiring us all.
Here's to more soft life, more blessings, more breakthroughs!
#BirthdayStar #LevelUpSeason #SoftLifeOnly

Datum 5

Big Birthday Love to the iconic angel!
You've been serving looks, vibes, and greatness all year!
May this new chapter bring bigger opportunities, clearer vision,

and all the things your heart has been praying for.
Let the celebration begin!
#Blessed Birthday Queen

Datum 6

A very HAPPY BIRTHDAY to my babe!
the one serving confidence, creativity, and class all year long!
Your journey is inspiring and your growth is beautiful to watch.
May this new year be filled with collaborations, breakthroughs, soft, peaceful moments.
#InfluencerMode #ContentCreatorLife #BirthdayGlow

Datum 7

Happy Birthday, my cockroach!
It's giving greatness, it's giving elevation,
it's giving "God's favorite" energy today!
More joy, more success, more global visibility this year!
Go celebrate in style—you've earned it.
#GlobalCitizen #ElevateYourLife #BirthdayEnergy

Datum 8

Happy Birthday, the elegant one!
Your presence brightens the world as candlelight warms the darkest room.
May your days be rich in kindness and your nights adorned with peace.
A most joyful birthday unto you.

Datum 9

Happy Birthday, my dear!
Rejoice! For this day marks the wondrous hour of your beginning.
May every blessing chase your steps and every dawn greet you with promise.
Happy Birthday, gentle spirit.

Datum 10

Happy Birthday, great soul!
May providence wrap you in its tender cloak and guide you through another fruitful year.
Your worth is greater than fine gold, and your smile a fairer jewel.
Joyous birthday greetings to you.

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